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ALASNAM'S LADY

LESLIE KEITH



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ALASNAM'S LADY.

A MODERN ROMANCE.

BY

LESLIE KEITH,

AUTHOR OF "SURRENDER," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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ALASNAM'S LADY.

CHAPTER I.

"Soit lointaine, soit voisine,
Espagnole ou Sarrasine,
Il n'est pas une cité
Qui dispute, sans folie,
A Grenade la jolie,
La pomme de la beauté,
Et qui, gracieuse, étale
Plus de pompe orientale
Sous un ciel plus enchanté."

DAME LAVOISIER was a prudent woman. She might consider in her secret heart that the variations Bell thought necessary for the rearing of her young cousin were a little too entirely pressed on the household, but she held her peace. She did more. She set her clever maids—skilled in all dainty arts—to trim and decorate the room destined for Di till it blossomed into a dainty bower under her touch.

If you would but let me arrange for you a

little," she said, contemplating with pride the draperies of pink and white muslin, in which she had swathed the bed and toilet-table, "your room is like a desert."

"No, indeed," said Bell emphatically; "you know I hate curtains. And, besides, my windows face the back, where all the smuts come in."

"And yet you insist on this beautiful apartment for a little savage?"

"Di isn't a savage!" Bell corrected her with dignity. "And if she is silly, she can't help that, I suppose?"

"You will soon make her wise, my dear," said madame with her fine smile.

"I will try." Bell spoke sedately, quite unaware of any reason why she should smile in reply. "And you will help me, of course? You must give her French lessons; I dare say she has had no advantages at all. What is the use of knowing Spanish? One gets more than enough of Don Quixote in a translation."

"To learn a language one must live in the country where it is spoken," said madame, uttering this truism with an ulterior object not difficult to detect.

"Oh, I know quite well what you mean," said Bell calmly; "I have heard all that before."

"My child, your accent is really deplorable. It distresses me, it pains me beyond measure, it makes me feel as if I had failed in my duty towards you."

"Then I'll read French with Di and you," said Bell, beginning to laugh. "Between us we shall agonize you. How I pity your ears! I'll get another copy of 'Télémaque' and a new dictionary, and we can begin whenever Di has rested from her journey."

"A month in Paris—a little month," madame murmured, "would do more than the toil of years in this barbarous country."

"Di must see England first," Bell explained gravely. "You will notice that I am not at all prejudiced. I make no complaint about Scotland coming second; I am willing she should see everything before I take her to Kilmure."

"Then we go to Kilmure!" Madame folded her hands in resigned despair.

"Of course," said Bell, staring at her; "have you forgotten that my uncle is Scotch, though he has chosen to repudiate his country and live in a foreign land?"

"Ah," said madame lightly, "there may be good reasons for that."

Bell paused and looked at her doubtfully, trying, perhaps, to discover if there was a double meaning in this careless speech.

"I didn't know you knew," she said oracularly.

Madame did not know, but she said nothing.

"There is at least no reason why Di should not see her native land," Bell went on gravely after a moment. "And if she is not a great deal more silly than I think she is, she will be displeased with me that I do not take her there at once."

"One must not mind the displeasure of a foolish child," said madame, putting light finishing touches to the drapery of a mirror. Her neat bodice was stuck over with pins. She held her head on one side, and was seemingly absorbed in her task, but she glanced a little curiously at Bell, who stood twisting the cord of the blind absently in her fingers, and looking out in front of her with eyes that saw nothing. London was at least a degree more endurable than the Highland moors Bell held in such passionate love; it was also nearer the longed-for paradise on the other side of the channel.

Bell had apparently not heard the last words. She moved from the window presently, and came and stood near the table. She watched madame adjust an airy little bow of pink ribbon with great nicety.

"I want to be good to her," she broke out suddenly. "She is my only cousin, and my

uncle"—she hesitated—"if he is not all that he ought to have been, and I suppose that is what you meant when you spoke of reasons, there is the more need to take her away and to be kind to her."

"Eh, why shouldn't we be kind to the poor child?" said madame, who was very discreet. "A child like that is easily amused. We must take her to see the sights. The English love to look at the block on which they severed the heads of their kings and queens, and at the graves in Westminster Abbey. And for a little liveliness you could have a dance and a musical evening and a little acting, perhaps. I myself would not mind helping you to arrange the costumes. Believe me, young people must be gay."

"Oh, of course she must see the Tower—that is very instructive. And we'll have the dance, too, if she likes," said Bell, who wished to be magnanimous; "but I do hope she isn't like the Redmaynes and the Harrisons, with not a thought beyond balls and theatres."

"She is eighteen," said madame significantly.

"She will be nineteen in June. I asked her in my last letter," said this literal young lady. "But of course I wish her to be happy in her own way, if not in mine. I think the room will do splendidly; it only wants some books."

"Ah, *Télémaque* and the dictionary!—*Eugénie Grandet* is very improving reading."

"Balzac," said Bell severely, "you will be proposing Zola next."

"I will leave the literature to you," said madame gracefully; "but some flowers, you will not forbid the little one flowers, will you, Bell?"

"I have thought of them," she answered hastily, with an odd suspicion of a blush. "I'll provide them in good time; it's too soon yet, they would wither before she came. Lunch will be ready in ten minutes," she said warningly, disappearing as she spoke.

Madame Lavoisier laughed softly to herself in the solitude of the pretty room. Bell's independence, her formality, her candour amused the lady who acted the part of mother and guide. When she tried to hold a little secret she was only clumsy. Madame had a great respect for people who could keep a secret, but she loved Bell, and she forgave her that she could not better learn to command her face. That hint as to Mr. Ouvry's possible motives for living in Madrid was a mere random arrow, but that it had sped home proved how poor a woman of the world Bell was. Madame had but to ask and everything would be told her, but she had the grace not to ask. "In five minutes she will let the cousin know that she has penetrated the

father's little mystery." She shrugged her shoulders; how could she help it? She was sorry for the poor little victim about to be overwhelmed with Bell's compassionate kindness; but what could she do? You could no more teach Bell not to show what she felt than you could substitute a pure Parisian accent for her faulty French.

Meantime the house was being turned upside down for Di's benefit. Bell took infinite pains to secure for her the prettinesses she scorned for herself. The house which she had occupied for several winters had satisfied her, though it distressed her companion, because it was furnished with some regard to solidity, and because the frivolous trifles that it pleased the woman of her acquaintance to gather about them were absent.

Now all this was to be changed. Di was to be made comfortable and happy, and, if it was necessary to her felicity to be surrounded by monstrosities in the garish crewel work then coming into fashion, by specimens of curious and unlovely china, by King Charles' spaniels, Manx cats, love-birds, even, then these should not be awanting. She braved the laughter of her friend, Miss Townsend, and went to her for instruction. She was eager to learn, and busied herself with a patient study of the latest vagaries of the feminine fancy. Her own room,

as madame had protested, remained like a desert. There was no carpet, curtains were forbidden because these impeded the entrance of fresh air through the windows, open day and night to admit it. There was an atmosphere of chill robustness, a great look of virtue in the few plain, strong chairs, and the table loaded with books and materials for useful needlework. The contrast between it and the little bower made ready for Deonys was perfect. It would be difficult to explain all her motives in making these preparations, in "violating her principles," as Miss Townsend put it; but undoubtedly the strongest of them was a wish to be kind. She had neglected her cousin too long, and now she wished to atone for her neglect. When this young woman conceived any particular line of action to be her duty, she was apt to embrace it with a breathless promptitude, and her nearest obligation at this moment seemed to her to be the consolation of Deonys.

Madame might lift her eyebrows and shrug her shoulders delicately, but she could not make Bell see that she was arguing from a false premiss, when she supposed Di to be a suffering and badly-used young person. Bell, in truth, knew very little about her uncle, and could not have revealed any thrilling secrets to her friend, but she understood that he had "done something,"

in business that made it pleasant and comfortable for him to pitch his tent in a country that had then no extradition treaty with England. The very vagueness of the charge against him made her doubly severe in her judgment of him, but it also lent a two-edged keenness to her desire to console Di. With her, as with so many others, "to be loved one must be suffering;" she had little sympathy with the prosperous and the happy, but any hint of real pain or trouble was quick to stir her native kindness. She invested her unknown cousin with all her own sensitive shrinking from any taint of dishonour. She pictured her as living in a perpetual warfare between duty and affection, made the harder because she was undoubtedly, to judge by her letters, a weak and wavering little woman. In short, Di was the excellent and much-tried heroine of fiction; and Bell, the good genius who always comes forward to reward virtue in story books.

"You want to let her down gently, I know," said Miss Townsend, who came to survey the preparations in the capacity of critic. "But, Bell, my dear, I'm afraid you have overshot the mark. If you demoralize her with all this luxury, how will you reconcile her to Scotland, where I understand one has to rough it a little?"

"I suppose you think the kilt is universal,

and that we all live on porridge," said Bell, quick to defend her nation. "Not that I see any reason why we shouldn't. In the Crimean war it is a known fact that the kilted regiments suffered much less than the others, and as for porridge, if you would consent to take it for breakfast, Amelia ——"

"Thank you," said Miss Townsend faintly. "I think I'll see how it agrees with your cousin first."

"It would give you a beautiful complexion."

"That would be dear bought," said Miss Townsend, with a shudder. "Now, that's what I call very clever of you," she suddenly exclaimed. "I shouldn't have given you credit for so much diplomacy, Bell."

She was standing before a daintily-carved bookcase, and she glanced at its contents with much amusement. The books, which were good editions, had been selected with a great deal of cunning, and they, everyone of them, had for their theme the glorifying of "the North Countree." There was the immortal Scott, of course; and there were also the works of a later master of fiction, who has proved to us that the earthly paradise is to be found in certain islands of the far north Atlantic.

"Where could you find better books, for novels?" Bell asked, with a touch of defiance in her voice.

"Oh, certainly," said Miss Townsend demurely. "I'm so glad you don't draw the line short of novels. Scotch novels by Scotch writers, of course. I'll borrow some of them next time I have one of my bad colds."

"Well, only when you have a really bad one, Amelia."

"And what about the little Spanish cousin," said Amelia in an injured voice. "Do you mean to say you have bought all these books—not even got them from Mudie's or Smith's—just to be ready in case she falls ill!"

"I don't mean her to be ill—if I can help it," said Bell evasively.

"Now, Bell, do you mean to tell me Miss Ouvry won't read every one of these novels after you suppose her to be in bed and safely tucked in for the night? I dare say you will take away the candles, but you will give her a fire, of course—she is sure to be chilly—and she will be a horrid little paragon if she doesn't steal out of bed after you are gone and read herself blind by the light of the flames."

"She may read in the daytime," said Bell bravely.

"Read novels in the daytime! Do I hear aright?"

"I got them for her to read. And, Amelia, you don't understand. I can't explain. She

has suffered a great deal. She has been very unhappy."

"Oh," said Miss Townsend airily, "and I suppose I, being English, don't suffer when I have one of my——"

"I'll bring you a whole armful next time," Bell interrupted, owning herself to be defeated. "English ones—there are some good English novels."

"What a generous admission! I'll keep you to your word. Do you know, my dear, I think you are not so very unlike the rest of us, after all."

That Miss Bell had indeed a redeeming spice of folly in her to link her to her kind was proved to the satisfaction of Madame Lavoisier a few days later, when a neat hamper was delivered by the Great Northern Railway Company's van at the Kensington house.

"It's—some flowers I ordered," said Bell, eyeing the hamper rather shamefacedly. "Take it to my room, Morris."

"Flowers? oh, do let me help you to arrange them. I adore flowers," cried madame. "Covent Garden in the morning early—four—five o'clock. That is one of the things you must take the little cousin to see. It is less triste than the graves in the abbey."

"I didn't get these from Covent Garden."

Bell looked straight at her friend. "I sent to Kilmure for them ; the school children gathered them."

"Ah, from Kilmure." Madame spoke softly, as if she did not know very well—cunning woman—that the order had been given days before.

"I dare say you think me very silly," said Bell loftily.

"It is charming. A beautiful attention. I begin to have hope of you, my child."

"Oh, it isn't anything to make a fuss about," she answered almost petulantly ; "it was only a fancy of mine."

"Shall we put the poor flowers in water ?"

Madame's dainty fingers were hovering about the rope that bound the hamper. Her face was admirably grave. That the practical, sensible, unimaginative Bell should indulge in a fancy was a thing one might be pardoned for smiling at. Madame's hopes began to rise. To be sure this pretty attention was only for the benefit of the little cousin and for the glorification of Scotland, but it might grow—this little seed of sentiment. The next time it might be someone else for whom the flowers were ordered. Already, while her quick fingers were unravelling the knots, her Spanish castle was a-building. If one might not go to Paris, what was to hinder a

little bit of Paris from visiting London? There was a certain M. Adolphe, for instance, who had never seen the great modern Babylon, which, after all, it was the duty of every one to see. If the young guest about to arrive were unhappy, as Bell insisted, what could be better for her than the society of a lively and charming young man, who was, moreover, madame's cousin, and quite, one might say, a child of the house?

Madame had got the length of considering it a serious duty to provide for the perfecting of her pupil's accent, when Bell somewhat rudely checked the growth of this air-fabric.

"Don't trouble yourself about arranging them," she said; "they are only wild flowers. You know you don't care about wild flowers."

"There are here the contents of an entire wood," said madame, contemplating the treasure before her. "They have been diligent for once, the children. But to sleep with so many flowers about one?"

"Morris can take the vases away at night," said Bell, preparing to march off with her spoils. "Of course, I know they are not good in a sleeping room, especially for people who won't open the window, and prefer to kill themselves with carbonic acid."

With this parting shot she lifted the hamper and went away, her head in the air, her step

firm. It was true, as madame said, that the whole spring verdure of the Kylmure woods seemed to have been transported to the dull London house. There were no cowslips like those that grew tall and strong on the banks of the Kylmure burn under the birches and firs; the little blue cups of the squill seemed to bring with them the deep azure of the sky and the scent and sound of the sea as it breaks on the red-brown rocks of that northern shore. Bell, with her passionate patriotism, felt as if the very flowers must plead with Di for love of the land they came from. Surely, she could not mistake their language.

The room looked very pretty when the last touches were put to it. It would, perhaps, be too much to say that all this elaborate preparation was part of a deep-laid scheme, but it was certain that Bell entertained subtle plans for winning Di over to loyalty. She would teach her to love Scotland so much that she would never care to leave it. She was very angry indeed when madame hinted that Di might fall in love and might even marry and settle far from the north.

"What has she to do with marriage?" she said hotly. "She will never think of it—never. You must not put such notions into her head."

"They generally come of themselves."

"Not unless they are talked about. You must not speak to her about lovers," she lec-

tered her old governess ; and madame, afraid to imperil M. Adolphe's chances of an invitation to London, promised penitently.

"She will live with me. I don't mean to marry, as you know quite well ; and I have plenty of money for us both."

"And the little one's father ?"

"Of course he must consent. He will see that it is for her good. She will have advantages here that she could not have in Spain, and there are many reasons why it would be best. As for all that talk about marrying, I think it is great folly."

"There are so many foolish people in the world !"

"Well, Di and I need not add to the number. We can stay all the year round at Kylmure, when you carry out that ridiculous plan of yours, and go to live in Paris. Yes, I think it will be very cruel of you to leave me ; but how can I help it, if you will be so unpatriotic ?"

It was clear that Miss Bell was very indignant indeed.

* * * * *

Meantime, to go back a little, Di, whose future was thus being arranged for her, was travelling with her companions towards Granada.

They started one night late in April. At the last moment Ralph found that he could not go

with them, but he had been of the greatest use, Mrs. Henshaw said, addressing Deonys. The ladies, with their maid, had a compartment for themselves; while Felix and Mr. Ouvry elected to smoke. Ralph had seen to the luggage and got the tickets, he had also supplied them with literature for the journey. It was wonderful, considering that he was a bachelor and had no sister, how thoughtful he was. Mrs. Henshaw pointed out that you did not expect such delicate attentions from a man who had enjoyed so little of ladies' society.

"Perfume and flowers, and just the cakes you like best, Philippa. Perhaps Miss Ouvry will let you have some—just one or two tiny ones. No, my dear, you must not give me your flowers. Think how disappointed somebody would be!"

"Ralph meant them for us all," said Di, showering sweetmeats hastily into Philippa's lap; but Mrs. Henshaw shook her head. She was gracious, even playful, and not at all jealous. She spent many moments of the night, while Philippa slept and Di would fain have followed her example, in discoursing on Ralph's merits.

All the time they were journeying through La Mancha, its twirling wind-mills—those giants that the knight of sad countenance went forth to conquer—motionless and black against the faint moonlit sky. Di looked out at that sad

breadth of upland country, which is classic ground for every traveller, and listened, with what patience she could summon, to this praise of Ralph.

"We must wait for him," said the speaker. "I'll write him one of my little notes when we get to the hotel. Nobody ever refuses me. Business, did you say? Oh, he will come, never fear. There are stronger motives. When Philippa's poor dear papa was in love with me——" Then she launched into a long story, in the middle of which Di was rude enough to fall asleep.

At Menjibar they had breakfast. Mrs. Henshaw was not quite so amiable as before; but then, after a night journey, one needs to be young in order to maintain one's cheerful views of life.

Felix slipped out while the others still lingered at the table, and examined the resources of the diligence to which they were harnessing the long team of mules. A stout, elderly Spanish gentleman, wrapped in a cloak and smoking a cigarette, had taken a seat in the coupé; but there were still two vacant places.

He returned and went boldly up to Deonys.

"If you would care to sit in the coupé," he said, "there's room. You like the air, I know; and it's a good place for a view."

"The coupé?" said Di, so that everybody could hear. "Oh yes, it is the best place for a view. Philippa must sit there. I have seen it all before."

She turned away, and left the young man disconsolate and rather angry, if the truth must be told. Had he not carefully arranged his "traps," so that there should be room for only one other person? and here it was coolly proposed that he should take Philippa!

Di soon settled matters by seating herself inside the lumbering coach with her father and Mrs. Henshaw; and that lady, seeing her daughter about to mount the ladder brought out for her benefit, insisted, with much apparent anxiety, that Mr. Chester should look after her, and see that no disaster befell her.

"A strange gentleman, you know—isn't there room for Blake?"

"There isn't much room for any one. A small person would be best," said Felix, his hopes reviving. (Blake was even taller than her young mistress.) But though he looked at Di, she never so much as turned her head. She was making some little arrangements for her father's comfort.

"There, padre," she said, "put your feet up here; I've plenty of room."

"Perhaps if your maid changed places with

me——," Felix began again, lingering at the window.

"I can't possibly do without her," said Mrs. Henshaw hastily. Then, confidentially, "I trust you to take care of my child."

Meanwhile Philippa had mounted nimbly.

"There's lots of room," she called out; and Felix, resigned to his fate, took his seat beside her.

"How ridiculous mamma is! As if I were likely to fall out! It was nice of Di to give me this place. It is very pleasant up here, don't you think?"

"Charming," he answered. But for the first ten minutes he was almost sulky.

So they travelled through fair Andalusia, climbing upwards by a road all bordered with flowers, the hills before them soft with quick-changing light and shadow.

At Jaen they stopped to dine—a sleepy place, with the silence and indolence of the East about its courts and palm-fringed gardens. Then on again in the same order as before; but now they drove under a snow of blossoming trees, and with the singing of the Jaen to make their music all the way.

By this time everybody was a little cross and tired. Mr. Ouvry and Mrs. Henshaw slumbered by fits and starts, and even the lively talk in

the coupé ceased ; and there was no more interest to be got out of the straggling, wayward mules, or the muleteer's maledictions. Their fellow-passenger scattered sombre remarks, which neither of them cared to appropriate ; then he, too, wrapped himself closer in the folds of his big cloak and fell asleep. Felix, disregarding the proprieties and leaving Philippa to her fate, got down once or twice to stretch his cramped limbs and gather a handful of flowers to pass in at the window by which Di sat.

As they neared their journey's end the country about them grew wilder, more rugged, with downward glimpses into valleys and hamlets where the shadows were falling fast. By-and-by the moon sailed up, and whitened all the path before them.

Felix had been walking for a long time, keeping pace easily with the diligence, for the mules were tired, and would no longer be spurred on by any threats of the mayoral. Di, who was not asleep, could see him from her corner. In a little while he came up and tapped softly on the glass. She rose, and lowered it with great caution.

"They are all asleep," she whispered.

"Can't you come out ?" he asked, also speaking low.

She shook her head.

"It would disturb them."

"I wanted to look at Granada with you—for the first time," he said. "They tell me we shall see it in a moment—from the bridge."

She answered nothing as she leaned out. She still held the flowers he had gathered, and they scented the air. The moonlit spring night was very still about them; here and there were checkered bands of shadow, but the silver radiance seemed to grow and spread. Presently, across the vega, they saw the city shadowy and mysterious, crowning the heights, with a red light burning here and there, and behind it the dusky mass of the sierras relieved against the sky. They could hear a clock somewhere chiming eleven; there was no other sound except the jingle of the harness bells.

The city seemed asleep, and they had the whole wide world to themselves.

CHAPTER II.

"Et ego in Arcadiâ vixi."

"WHY wasn't I born four hundred years ago?" said Felix. "I might have been sultan here as well as another fellow."

"You would have made a capital sultan," said Philippa; "you are so magnificently idle."

"Not to desire or admire, if a man could learn it, were
more
Than to walk all day like the Sultan of old in a garden
of spice,"

said Mr. Ouvry, who could quote gracefully on occasion. He got up and went away slowly, leaving the young people to their raptures.

"Where are you going, padre?" Di sprang after him. She slid her hand through his arm.

"Only to read the newspapers."

"Newspapers!" said the girl wonderingly. It seemed to her strange that any one could care to follow the dry course of politics while he

might breathe at ease the large and liberal air of the Alhambra.

"Chester has lent me the *Times*—only a week old, this time. The legends are enough for you, eh? That's the way with you women, you care more for the oldest and mustiest love story than for the fate of a nation."

"Oh, but I haven't forgotten the fate of the nation," said Di, who had but yesterday seen the ragged Carlist prisoners taking exercise under guard in the deserted court of Philip's huge blunder. "There, I'll leave you in peace to read, padre, and you can tell me by-and-by what is going to happen to us."

But she did not immediately follow his advice and go back to her friends.

To feel to the full the strange spell of this dream palace one must be alone, or, at best, in the dim company of vanished caliphs and dark-eyed houris. She was best pleased to escape her companions for a little. She went and parted the myrtle hedge, and peeped at the gold-fish teeming in the basin; the water is clear and shows a double growth of slender shaft and arch; she dipped her fingers in it and stirred the ripples till the strange and ancient writing reflected in it wavered and grew indistinct.

It is all very solitary. The rough wall of the

Torre di Comares rises boldly at one end ; within and beyond are other courts dimly seen, and furthest away of all a window in which a bit of azure sky is caught and framed.

Deonys sat down on the cool marble and looked about her at the faded splendour, the hints of past magnificence, the solemn invocations in strange tracery everywhere round her. She was thrilled and excited, and full of wondering admiration, and yet she was restless ; the peace, the slumberous silence, the blank indifference to the life of to-day that meets you everywhere within these walls troubled her and somehow disturbed her serenity—or was it, perhaps, the light laughter that reached her carried on the clear still air ? For once, Philippa's voice had an unwelcome sound.

When she went back to her companions, she found those two prosaic young people discussing the pleasures of idleness. Felix was hotly proving from poetic and other sources that it “ hath its morality.”

He was lying on his back, his head supported by his hands ; while Philippa had seated herself—another Una—on one of the lions that surround the great marble basin in the court that bears their name. He looked up eagerly when Di appeared coming slowly through the gleaming forest of columns.

"Come and defend me," he said. He seldom called her by her name.

"Who is accusing you?" She drew a little nearer.

"His own conscience," said Philippa promptly, "if he has any left by this time. Can you imagine anything more shameful than lying in bed till ten o'clock—here of all places?"

"It's a well-known axiom that you can't burn your candle at both ends at once," he replied meekly. "I was consuming the midnight oil long after your light was out."

"Oh, I know. You were 'boiling down' Murray. Now, do you think there is any good in making hash of another person's mutton in that way? For my part, I like the joint best whole. I don't care for literary spoon meat. It's a poor compliment to my intellectual appetite."

"This, for instance," said Felix—he seized the guide-book and read. "'The court is an hypæthral quadrilateral oblong of twenty-six feet by seventy-three feet wide, and twenty-two and a half feet under the galleries.' There's a nice plain, bald statement for you. Our next duty is to pace it, and see whether the measurement is perfectly correct. If we could make it out a quarter of an inch wrong either way that would be so much kudos for us."

"You may go alone then—it's too hot—you may have all the glory to yourself. If I kept a diary I'd try to find something fresh to say."

"Did you ever try to write a book?"

"No. Don't you know it's the distinguished people who don't write books?"

"Well, it's a very wholesome experience," he observed, following with his eye the movements of a white dress passing now from sunshine into shadow. "I wrote one once."

"A tragedy in blank verse, no doubt. I've noticed that is what everybody begins with."

"I was rather proud of that performance. I rather expected that when it appeared it would make a small sensation. I had visions of editors scowling at each other on the stairs that lead to my rooms, and of printers' devils jostling each other in the lobby. I was prepared to be interviewed by the society journals as the coming man, you know ——"

"Well—what came of it all?"

"Nothing came of it all," said Felix, solemnly. "That book disappeared mysteriously—it was strangled in the birth. It's a case of the 'survival of the fittest,' I suppose. I consoled myself with the remembrance that I was not the only aspiring genius doomed to silence."

"What a dreadful and most dismal world it

would be, if all the tragedies that are written were published!" said Philippa, meditatively. "Suppose some new-fledged M.P., burning to distinguish himself, brought in a bill making it compulsory on us all to read them! Here comes Di. I think we'll not tell Mr. Chester what he missed this morning, Di. We don't want our adventures to be ignominiously buried in an editor's waste paper basket."

"Not even if I promise to respect your mutton?" He spoke lazily, but he rose and went forward to the tazza. Di was leaning over it, staring absently at the water; he looked down at it too.

"Tell me about it," he said.

"This morning?" She straightened herself. "Oh, it was beautiful; it was too hot to sleep, so we got up as soon as it was light and went out. We came here by the Gate of Justice—that one with the hand and key carved on it, you know. It was dreadfully dark in the steep bit of road between the walls, and when we got to the place of Cisterns there was a sentry lying on a bench who looked just like one of the carved knights in the cathedral."

"Except that he was snoring," said Philippa.

"He never moved when we passed him. Then we got in by the little door, and it was like stepping out of to-day into yesterday. You

might have thought you were among the Moors again."

"Only"—Philippa again interrupted carelessly—"Moorish gentlemen didn't wear frock coats and tall hats and light kid gloves, did they?"

"Did you expect him to wear a turban?"

"He? Who is he?" said Felix, misliking the pronoun.

"That's a secret. No, Di; he is not to be told."

"Why not? There is nothing to hide. Just as we got into the Court of Myrtles we saw some one moving behind the pillars, and we were both a little startled; for it might have been a ghost, you know."

"Oh, a ghost," said Felix, comfortably. "So you met the fellow who haunts this place? Do the spectres hereabouts bow to the tyranny of public opinion in the matter of their 'get up'? A ghost in a frock coat and lavender kids—above all, a ghost in a tall hat——"

"But you are all wrong," said Di, laughingly; "it was a real man and a very fat one. I know him a little; and wasn't it odd that he should come here at the very same hour as we did?"

"Very odd indeed," said Felix gloomily.

"He said he saw us yesterday. He lives here, you know; we met him the last time."

"Oh, he lives here?" Felix began to hate the fellow on the spot. "Then he comes here often in the morning, I suppose."

"You had better get up to-morrow, and then perhaps you will see him too," said Philippa. "He speaks English very nicely, and he will tell you all the legends to put in your diary. I dare say he could call up spirits from the vasty deep for you too. He is very obliging. If there doesn't happen to be a story to fit your fancy, he'll make you one. He has a great deal of imagination—hasn't he, Di?"

"Oh, I don't know," she answered carelessly; and Felix began to brighten at once. "I didn't listen to him much. I think it would have been nicer if we had been alone. A man like that somehow makes beautiful things seem impossible."

"I should think so," said Felix, with great energy. "Whoever heard of a fellow getting himself up like that at four o'clock in the morning!"

"It was six; and I think it was very nice of him when he knew he was going to meet ladies."

"So he knew." Felix's voice grew grim once more.

"What nonsense, Philippa! How could he possibly tell that we were coming?" said Di

gravely. "And, after all, the time to see ghosts and to listen to the old stories is in the moonlight. I believe," she said, impressively, "if you come at the right hour you hear the strangest sounds—whisperings and murmurings and the clanking of chains—but the thing is to come at the right time."

"Let us come to-night," said Felix gaily; "there's moonlight if that is indispensable to his ghostship's appearing, and we can wait his pleasure."

"But there is more than one," said Philippa, with a little shudder; "there are ever so many. Don Juan Davila told us he had seen them. Didn't he, Di?"

"He said he had seen the whole of the Abencerrages," said Di, with a quaint little smile. "But you know you spoke about his imagination, Philippa."

"Why not a dozen as well as one? By all means let us have the whole lot. It is as well to go in for a big sensation when you are at it."

"I think it ought to be Boabdil who is not allowed to rest in his grave. It was he who beheaded them here—in the fountain." Di dipped her hand in the water that once ran red with the blood of an illustrious line; the drops trickled white and clear from her fingers.

"They say now it was another who did the

deed—not Boabdil at all; indeed, for all I know, they make the whole thing out to be a myth. They have a way nowadays of taking all the picturesqueness out of history.”

“Oh, but this must be true, at least, for there are the blood-stains!” Di pointed to the dingy spots, precious to the cicerone, that dim the whiteness of the marble.


“Well, that is conclusive evidence, certainly,” said Felix, with so much gravity that they all laughed.

Those were idle days that they spent in this Arcadia, where to be wise would have seemed the height of folly. Deonys gave herself up to the pleasure of the hour. If there was any little shadow on her happiness she strove to ignore it, and to enter heart and soul into the small jokes and repartees that pass current for the genuine coin of wit when one is young.

At lunch Mrs. Henshaw, who had been invisible all the morning, announced that she had news. Somebody was coming; an addition to their party; they must all guess.

“Not Miss Barbara?” said Felix, looking up with comic dismay.

“Oh, I know,” said Di carelessly, before anyone else could speak; “it is Ralph. He told us he would come.” She did not care for mysteries, and she resented Mrs. Henshaw’s pointed smiles.



"Is that all?" said Philippa. "I've a bigger bit of news than that. Mrs. St. John has come already; I saw her arrive. Herr von Rosen is with her, and the count, and a waggon-load of boxes."

"I saw them, too. You forgot Mr. Meyers," said Di innocently.

This piece of intelligence, at least, made some impression.

Mr. Ouvry looked up with elevated eyebrows; Mrs. Henshaw was almost agitated.

"Are you sure?" she asked. "You might be mistaken. To have her following us; it is really most annoying. You may be mistaken, Philippa. You take such fancies."

"Not a fancy to Mrs. St. John," said Philippa, smiling. "But for your comfort, mamma, she has been patriotic enough to go to the Washington."

Nobody hailed this arrival with pleasure, unless it were Felix, who, cunning youth, saw in this large addition to their party new chances of companionship with Di. It is to be feared he had, at this time, little sympathy with the unfortunate Mr. Meyers; and was, indeed, cruel enough to find Mrs. Henshaw's fears very amusing. He had offered her his arm. They were all going downwards under the arching elms to visit the cathedral, which is seen from

afar, rising above the roofs and palms in the very heart of the city.

"If it was anybody else," she was saying confidentially. "But Philippa is so soft-hearted; and I call it really most ungentlemanly to persecute her and follow her about in this fashion."

Felix smiled. He thought that so long as Mr. Meyers confined his persecution to casting languishing glances from the safe distance of the Washington, it might be borne without discomfort.

"Ah! if you knew what an anxiety it is to a mother's heart! If I could but know that my child had some one to guide and protect her before I die!"

"Die!" said Felix, with brutal cheerfulness. "Oh, you must not talk of such sad things. Would you like me——" he hesitated, while a whimsical recollection of his former interference crossed his mind. "Shall I give Meyers a hint?" It seemed to him as if his mission in life was to administer hints to the lovers of Philippa.

Mrs. Henshaw shook her head softly. What an obtuse young man this was! "It is very likely only my silly fears," she said. "It is absurd to be so easily depressed—isn't it? But I was always so sensitive. If Philippa were like other girls—Miss Ouvry, for instance."

"Yes." Felix looked at her with sudden interest.

"Ah," said his companion airily, "it is easy to guess her little secret. We all know how that will end; and an excellent thing, too."

"I don't know what you mean." Felix forgot to be polite in his anxiety. He stopped full in the middle of the street.

"No?" Her smile was incredulous. "I think you are pretending." She looked at him archly. "Surely *you* must know. Why don't you ask her? That would be much the best way. Ask her, and she will tell you herself." He said nothing in reply. He passed with her into the cathedral and stared about him with the others. Mr. Ouvry was discoursing in a hushed voice about the position of the choir in the churches of Spain. There is a screen behind the high altar which they all paused to look at. Isabella is seen riding on a white horse between Ferdinand and Mendoza, behind her comes a long train of knights, ladies, soldiers, captives. Boabdil holds out the keys: it is the story of the conquest written in stone. Not far off are the effigies of these same Catholic kings, kneeling placid and calm through the ages; their dust rests in the crypt below, their triumphs are long over.

At another moment these things might have stirred some interest in the breast of the young

man who looked and listened with the rest, but just now his mind was occupied with one urgent thought.

He looked at Mrs. Henshaw gratefully. He did not even think her aggravating when she patronized the pictures and the tombs, ticketing them with her meaningless, "how pretty!" "how nice!" He thought her very clever to have guessed his secret. "Why don't you ask her yourself?" she had said. It was excellent advice. He had hardly expected her to give it, and he was properly grateful. It was good-natured of her to offer him such straightforward counsel. He began to think he had misjudged her.

They all went up the hill together, so that there was no further chance of confidential talk. It was almost dark under the thick, over-arching trees; but when they had reached the hanging gardens and paused to glance behind them, they saw that the little town with its gaily-painted houses, was still in full sunshine. The solemn verdure of the cypresses, and the feathery crowns of the palms stood out against the pale blue of the sky. Beyond the roofs and the orchards the vega stretched wide and silent and seemingly deserted, till some subtle change of light revealed in a flash the walls and towers of the conqueror's city, Santa Fé.

"Let us go in and have some tea," said Mrs. Henshaw. "What tiring work sight-seeing is! We have done nearly everything now, haven't we, Mr. Ouvry?"

"There's the Cartuja. The guide-books insist on your visiting it."

"What is it—a monastery? Oh, then you gentlemen will go alone, of course."

"Why of course?" said Philippa. "I delight in monasteries."

"There's a fine library. It is well worth a visit."

"I like the monks better than their musty parchments; and they are always very glad to see us, whatever they may pretend."

"Philippa!" said her mamma warningly.

"They don't get too much of ladies' society, certainly."

"I suppose you will tell me that is why they like it?" Philippa looked reproachfully at Mr. Ouvry.

"Of course we'll go," said Felix, before any one else could speak. "There are hundreds of things to see yet. One might spend years—a lifetime here, and not grow tired of it."

"Then perhaps you won't miss your English newspapers if I borrow them for an hour?" said Mr. Ouvry drily.

Felix stared at him; then he burst out

laughing. "I haven't opened one since I came," he said. "I'll fetch them."

In the evening while they all sat after dinner in the formal little garden, Mrs. St. John sailed across from the rival hotel.

She came with all her retinue, except the unhappy Mr. Meyers, who preferred solitary wretchedness. In his absence Mrs. Henshaw unbent a little—but only a little. Her insular prejudices objected to the lively American and her mode of travelling.

"Mr. St. John is not with you?" she questioned frigidly.

"No; he doesn't seem to care to go round with me to every place. He'll pick me up here, unless we go off to Seville without him. You are going there for Holy Week, of course?"

"The processions are not worth going to see, I believe," said Mrs. Henshaw, making up her mind on the spot; "and we have seen that sort of thing so often. We have travelled a great deal—my daughter and I."

"Well, your daughter would like it, I guess. She's like me—she likes going about and talking to people. There wasn't a soul left to talk to in Madrid. I'd have got sick if I had stayed there another hour."

"Philippa finds this place very improving.

There's so much for a cultivated mind to enjoy," said the older matron instructively.

"I dare say. But I guess she'll like going round better now that the gentlemen have come. I wanted Mr. Meyers to come with us, but he wouldn't. Now, I wonder why he wouldn't come! It's queer taste, isn't it, liking to be alone?" She stole a glance at Philippa as she spoke.

During this exchange of repartee Di sat a little apart. She looked enviously after her father, who presently slipped away to his room, and to the study of the *Times*. She was tired after the long, bright day—she whom nothing used to tire. Presently she felt a hand resting on the back of her chair, and a little thrill passed through her. But when Felix said to her, speaking very low—

"Do you remember your promise this morning? The moon is up now. I have been out to see."

"Oh, about the ghosts!" she answered, in a clear, high voice. "Yes, let us all go." She stood up and drew a light shawl she was wearing closer about her. "I am ready," she said, not looking at him. "Have you told the others?"

Philippa, who was talking to Herr von Rosen, looked up and nodded; and, after a

minute's discussion, everybody rose except Mrs. Henshaw, who excused herself.

They strolled through the gardens, musical with the silvery trickle of running waters, and passed the threshold of the little door that, as Di had said, divides Moorish yesterday from Spanish to-day.

"Well, now, who is going to tell the story?" said Mrs. St. John. "I declare I feel quite nervous already. What's that?"

They all listened, catching their breath a little, but no sound was to be heard. They were in the Court of Lions, and had gathered about the fountain. The moon had sailed up, and was shining on the floor in great white patches that were crossed here and there with bars of shadow. The tracery on the walls shimmered like a filmy curtain of lace—you might have thought that a breath would blow it aside and reveal a dark, sad-eyed face behind. The place was indeed full of shadowy company; but it was not the Abencerrages who went by dragging their chains.

"A love-story would be better," said some one. "The ghosts decline to appear. Spectres are shy of a crowd; there's safety from them in numbers."

"Have you heard the legend of the Lady of the Fountain?" said Herr von Rosen, looking

at Philippa. "It's a peautiful story; it is prettier dan ze Abencerrages."

"No. Won't you tell it us?"

He began at once, nothing loth. As they were most of them young, they ought, of course, to have been deeply interested in the woes of the fair lady who dropped tears of sorrow into the fountain, and thus broke the Moorish spell; but there are drawbacks to the charm of the most thrilling love-story, when it is told in very broken English, and I am afraid these irreverent listeners were secretly laughing at the baron's gutturals all the time.

"Well, I wouldn't cry for any man, I know," said Mrs. St. John, tossing her head, "though it did bring him back to me; but that lute, now, I shouldn't mind having that. I'd play it when I wanted to put Mr. St. John in a good humour."

"He could never be anything but amiable to you," said the count gallantly.

"But he is—he's cross sometimes. It's the way with them all, but *my* kind of playing doesn't seem to make him sweeter tempered. I guess there was something special about that lute. I wonder where it is now?"

"Listen! Don't you hear it? She is playing now," said Philippa, lifting one hand with an authoritative gesture.

There was music, indeed, which their voices and laughter had drowned, but it came faint and sweet from the heart of the misty, moonlit elms. It drew them away to the Hall of the Ambassadors, from whose deep embrasures they could look down on the sleeping town. The murmur of the Darro, dancing downwards, reached them; now and again a stray moonbeam caught its ripples. From the Albaicin on the other side of the valley came the faint tinkle of a convent bell; but these sounds seemed to hush themselves presently, as if all the world had conspired to keep silence that the one great wave of music might be better heard. For now on every side of them, throbbing through the night, rose and fell the chorus of the nightingales, sad and joyous, passionate and pleading.

"Let us go to the Tower and see the moonlight on the Nevada snows," said young Walter Tyne, a shy youth of eighteen, who was carrying Mrs. St. John's shawl. He blushed hotly as he spoke, but he recovered himself when everybody agreed it was the thing to do, and led the way boldly.

Di, who was leaning far out over the railing that protected the recess, did not hear this proposal. By-and-by the unusual silence forced itself upon her senses; when she looked up they were all gone. They had forgotten or not

missed her. She was not sorry to be left alone. She hated the chatter and laughter of her companions, it jarred upon her mood, and she could not but see that Herr von Rosen was constantly at Philippa's side. Was he to meet the same fate as Mr. Meyers, who had built all his hopes on a foundation of shifting sand? And Philippa, how could she endure the German's presence, his broken English, his broad compliments, when she had but to hold out her hand——. Di did not finish the sentence to herself. She stole out of her corner presently; it was too late to follow the others, even if she had known where they were. She listened a moment, but she could hear no sound of their steps or their voices. She was not afraid. Some one would surely miss her by-and-by and return. There was rest and soothing in the cool darkness; and outside the peaceful music of the nightingales had not ceased. She wandered through the deserted halls till she reached the *Mirrador*—that little boudoir of the Sultanas that looks down on the garden of the *Lindaraxa*, a neglected tangle where all sweet things grow uncared for now. The air that came in at the arched window was heavy with the scent of orange blossom and roses. She went and leaned her head against the cold stone, and shut her eyes. She was thinking of many things—of England

and her cousin, of Philippa and that promise given bravely and meant truly, "You may trust me."

When she heard a step she did not stir. She knew who it was—who alone, of all the gay company, had missed her and come to seek her here. Her heart seemed to contract and to stand still for a moment, but when Felix came up and laid his hand on the sill where her hand was resting, she said to him in quite her usual voice—

"I've been thinking it's a pity we can't stay here till the eve of St. John."

"Why till then?" he asked, but his voice was absent.

"You would see ghosts enough then," she said, with a smile. She leaned out and plucked a rose, pulling it to pieces, and watching the petals float slowly downwards.

"King Boabdil holds his court in a cave over there, under the mountains; and all his subjects crowd to do him homage. You see them riding quick as the wind, and the moonlight flashes on their armour, and on their still white faces. They have to make haste, you know, for they have only an hour or two of life; they must vanish before the dawn breaks till June comes round again. There's a popular ballad about it. I wonder if I can remember it——"

"I remember another story about St. John's day," he said quickly. "Have you never heard how lovers go out on Midsummer morning to gather flowers before the sun drinks up the dew, and do you know the meaning of that old custom ; shall I tell it you ?"

"I think we have a legend about that too," she said carelessly, intent on watching the last petal float away from her fingers. "What a lot of foolish old stories we have remembered to-day !"

"There is one more you must listen to ; it is a true story this time." He laid his hand on hers that still rested so confidently on the carved stone of the window. "Di," he said, and all his heart was in his voice, "you will listen. Can't you guess ? Don't you know that I love you ?"

CHAPTER III.

"I summon up remembrance of past things."

WHEN Malleson got Mrs. Henshaw's note he tossed it aside with a careless hand. "What is she up to now?" he wondered. She did not as a rule show herself very eager for his company. Ever since he had unwittingly disappointed her by failing to rise to her expectations, and come up to her standard in matters social, her behaviour to him had been tinged with a welcome coldness; now, for some mysterious reason of her own, she was almost effusive. One might believe that her pleasure in all the brave sights of the South was incomplete without his presence.

His thoughts about her were not very respectful; but, when ladies make requests, gentlemen must answer them politely. He wrote three lines, promising to join her party on a certain day. Before he journeyed to Granada he had a visit to pay. He went to see Mrs. Gordon, and he chose

the hour and the day when he felt pretty sure of Miss Barbara's inability to be present. Miss Barbara devoted certain moments of each week to what she called "tidying her drawers," a process full of mystery to him, but which he knew might not be lightly interrupted. He found Mrs. Gordon, as he had hoped, alone; the great, bare room was unshaded, and open to the untempered sunshine.

"I've come to ask you some questions," said Malleson, sitting down with his back to the light. These two understood each other too well to stand in need of any prelude to their talk.

"I think I can guess what they are, since you look so grave."

"I 'want to know,' like the young women in American fiction—well, there's a good deal I want to know. You are a very charitable person, but I warn you I'm not going to be melted by any appeals to my milk of human kindness—I haven't got any for that matter; it was all turned to gall long ago, and I'm determined to get to the bottom of this mystery."

"How fierce you look! Don't scowl at me like that!"

"I mean to be fierce."

"But there is no mystery—as far as I am concerned there is really nothing to tell."

And I 'want to know,' too. Have you any reason for asking this of me just now?"

"Reason enough. Mrs. Henshaw—you see I'm speaking of her with all respect—has been treating Di to various hints and allusions after the manner of women. I believe you would, most of you, be tortured rather than speak straight out."

"Do you call that respectful?" murmured Mrs. Gordon.

"I may be wrong," he said, forced to smile; "but in this case I think I am right, and when a lady takes to nods and becks and wreathed smiles—or frowns, rather—it's an instinct with me immediately to want to know what is behind."

"I don't see how you can help Di."

"Well, I'll try, at any rate."

He began to whistle very softly to himself in an absent fashion, staring over Mrs. Gordon's head at the wall.

"Why don't you begin?" he said, suddenly bringing his dark, keen eyes inquiringly upon her.

"Begin! What an inquisitor you would have made! Shake up my pillows and lift me a little, Ralph. I feel too much in your power."

He lifted her with great gentleness, and settled the cushions deftly, but he was inexorable.

"Now we are on equal terms," he said. "You see, I've not even asked leave to smoke, though you are indulgent to that bad habit of mine. You can begin your story as soon as you like."

"If it weren't for Di's sake—" she looked troubled—"it would be much better to forget all such old stories."

"Look here, I'll help you," he said. "Suppose you tell me the meaning of this unexplained and sentimental relation between the lady and Di's father—if it is sentimental. If Di is to have a stepmother it might be as well to prepare her mind for it gradually."

"A stepmother!" said Mrs. Gordon. "Oh, I am sure, I am quite sure you are mistaken. There never was a hint of an attachment between them long ago; and, Mr. Ouvry—I don't think he would marry her."

"She might marry him. It is done sometimes, I believe."

"Not when Di's father is the man." She smiled.

"I grant it doesn't seem likely. But stranger things have happened."

"I suppose I must tell you what I know. I am certain, at least, you are wrong in this fancy, and you will not let me rest till I set you right."

"What is done is not to do," said Ralph care-

lessly ; "I've found proverbs an immense help in my journey through life."

Mrs. Gordon clasped her hands together for a moment. She seemed to study his dark keen face.

"You can trust me, you know," he said, with a sudden smile that transfigured it. She began then without further protest.

"Mrs. Henshaw was a Miss Blake," she said. "I knew her long ago in her girlhood ; we had gone then to live at Whitethorpe, in Essex. That was before I knew my Harry." She paused an instant, then she went on : "It was hardly more than a village, though it called itself a town, and we soon knew everything about each other. The Blakes were the big people of the place ; Mr. Blake was both lawyer and banker, and we poor new-comers looked upon him as a sort of millionaire. Miss Blake was talked of as an heiress, and she visited a good deal in the county ; I remember we used to envy her when she was asked to the balls at Colchester. Pleasures were fewer then, and a season in London was beyond the most audacious dream."

He saw how reluctant she was to reach the vital point in her story, and he let her tell it in her own way. There was pain for her too, in this summoning up of past things. "She was

very pretty," she continued, "with Philippa's beautiful colour and slim, straight figure; but there was a young girl who was brought up with her whom we all liked a great deal better."

"Who was she?"

"Di's mother," said Mrs. Gordon, quietly.

"Di's mother?" he echoed, taken by surprise.

"They were brought up together!"

"She was an orphan, and a ward of Mr. Blake's. I suppose she was not nearly so handsome as Miss Blake, but we never thought of that. She was the brightest, merriest sprite I ever knew; and we all, boys and girls alike, fell in love with her."

"And of course she was despised and ill-used at home," said Ralph nonchalantly. "It's the old story of fiction—Cinderella among the ashes and the step-sisters queening it at the ball. You needn't bother to go into details."

"No, there was nothing of that kind—they treated her perfectly well. Mr. Blake was really fond of her, and Mrs. Blake had a great deal of superficial good nature. I remember my mother and the other matrons used to hold her up as a model of impartiality, and you can suppose they were not uncritical. The girls were always dressed alike, and went everywhere together; and, considering that Mary Burton had no money of her own, that really implied some

generosity. Mary used to fly about after Charlotte Blake, and do all her errands, but that was out of pure goodwill. She was the most unselfish creature I have ever known; and then Charlotte had a way of getting what she wanted—we all gave in to her.”

“The child is mother of the woman,” said Ralph softly. “And now we are coming to the glass slipper business. Ouvry was the prince, I suppose? There’s no accounting for the tastes of women.”

“I have told my story very badly,” she continued, not heeding his comment; “for I have never said anything about the Kings. Dr. King had the next best house to the Blakes, and he was of much better family. There was a great household of boys and girls; but Alec was the eldest, and our chief ally. I told you all the boys were in love with Mary Burton—my brother Tom, the clerks at the Bank, and the young curates; those of them, at least, who were not attracted by Miss Blake’s pretty face and her fabled fortune. It wasn’t very serious with Tom, poor Tom was always taking a fancy to some new girl,” she said, with a smile and a sigh for those old vanished days. “I believe he exchanged locks of hair and sentimental verses with every one of the King girls in turn, and even with Charlotte Blake; but with

Alec King it was very different—it was once for all with him.”

“We have arrived at the prince, then?”

“Poor Alec! How often I have wished to see him again, and to ask his pardon for the hard thoughts I had of him. But that was all afterwards, and I am rambling as usual. I used to contrive meetings for them under the big laurel hedge, and smuggle letters between them,” she said with her tender smile. “There wasn’t the smallest need for concealment, for everybody knew about their fancy for each other, but it sounded more romantic. We were young and silly, I dare say; and we thought an interview to which we stole out, wrapped in big cloaks, with the hoods drawn over our heads, was a much finer thing than a chat in the prosaic comfort of the parlour. I had my Harry then, and I thought lovers the most interesting creatures in the world. Alec’s people and the Blakes looked on it as a mere boy and girl fancy. I want you to remember this. There was no talk of an engagement; they were both so young, and Alec had his way to make in life—he was going to India. But, though the elders shook their heads and talked of the short life of most first loves and the imprudence of early entanglements, some of us presumed to know better. I have not

made you understand Mary Burton at all unless you have realized how steadfast a nature hers was, in spite of its gentleness, and Alec was worthy of her. I remember very vividly their parting; there was no elaborate exchange of vows, but we knew that they would be true to each other, and Mary considered herself as much bound up with Alec's fortunes as I was with my Harry's.

"I think we were all rather uncomfortable before he sailed for India; and perhaps it wasn't purely romance that made us encourage those meetings in the garden. I don't know how we came to find out Charlotte Blake's secret, but I know that it was plain to everybody except Alec and Mary. It would not have been considered a good match for Charlotte, for the Kings were poor; but if Alec had but chosen her instead of Mary, I believe she would have clung to him through everything. I have often thought he might have made a good woman of her."

"Then Mr. Alec King must be cleverer than most men."

"Ah, you don't understand; love can work miracles. But, then he did not love her, you see."

"And so she hated him. I understand."

"She came to consider herself badly used—

at least, she grew to think so in after years; and Mrs. Blake, I believe, thought so too."

"Now we are coming to the persecution."

No, there was no open unkindness. They were just the same to Mary, or, if they were colder, she was too absorbed or too generous to notice it. Mrs. Blake used to pet and make of Charlotte more than ever, but that was all. Alec had gone away by this time, and when we heard that there was a strange young man coming to manage the Bank, we all hoped that he might fall in love with Charlotte Blake, and give a new direction to her thoughts. She liked people to admire her, and—well, hitherto one had done as well as another. How were we to guess that this was the one true emotion of her life? I'm afraid we thought chiefly of Mary's comfort, when we tried to provide her with a new admirer. But when he came——"

"He, being Ouvry?"

"Yes. Well, he fell in love with nobody."

"He was already in love with himself, no doubt."

"He was a surprise to us all, with his cold, soft ways. Somehow I think young men were more ardent long ago, and we could not understand how any one could help liking the King girls and blithe Mary Burton. He didn't even seem to admire Charlotte Blake's beauty, or

scarcely to notice her, though he was much in her father's house. The only person who got on with him at all was Mr. Blake, who thought him a very clever young man—indeed, we were all a little afraid of his cleverness, we heard so much about it. At this time Mary grew rather grave and sad, for Alec's letters stopped suddenly."

"I see. No letters ever came, I suppose?"

"None, after the first. She waited three years. My Harry and I had married long before this, and had left Whitethorpe. We only came back at intervals; and every time I saw Mary she seemed to me more pale and spiritless. All sorts of sad changes seemed to come at once, for Dr. King died suddenly, before Alec reached India, and the family went to live near Mrs. King's friends, in the north of Scotland, so that they quite dropped out of our lives. Charlotte Blake was the only one of us who corresponded with the girls. I had no time for letter-writing, and Mary had no heart for it; so the half-yearly epistles fell to Charlotte. I remember well how she came to me one day, on my last visit to my old home, and told me that Alec had written to his mother that 'he had changed his mind,' and that his engagement, if they had held it one, was to be considered at an end. Charlotte was agitated,

and I recall vividly yet the look of half-triumph, half-dread in her eyes. The Kings thought he had behaved very badly, but no words can express my indignation and disappointment. I had believed Alec to be as honourable and true as my Harry, and 'he had changed his mind!' Mary took it very quietly. She had strength enough left to suffer in silence. The next thing I heard was that she was going to marry Mr. Ouvry. I can't tell you how sad this news made me. There was no pretence of love on her side; and he—you could never tell what he felt—but I could not persuade myself he cared for her. I wrote and remonstrated as strongly as I dared, though I knew it was of no use. She said they all urged her, and—what better could she do? I know now, and I think I knew even then that nothing can justify a loveless marriage; but I can understand the prompting to self-sacrifice that made it possible for her—the desire that another life should not be spoiled as hers had been spoiled."

"And he represented to her that his life would be spoiled, as you put it, unless she consented?"

"I know that he did press his claim. Sometimes I wonder if, after all, he did not really love her, once."

"We may give him the benefit of the doubt, till we arrive at the real motive."

"There were plenty of people to show her what they thought to be her duty," she went on, too absorbed to notice his sneer. "Everybody said it was a good thing for her—a girl who had been jilted—to make so excellent a marriage; and pointed to his business qualifications and his cleverness, and spoke of him as Mr. Blake's successor. But that time was altogether full of surprises, for they went off the very hour of the marriage; and the next thing we heard was that they intended to settle abroad."

"So far it is all plain enough," said Malleson, rising and beginning to pace the room. "It's the old plot that has been done to death in third-rate novels. One young lady has been overlooked and wounded in her tenderest feelings, etc., etc.; and, in order to punish her rival, she writes a letter, in her name, to the young man, giving him up—for no reason in particular—and, being in league with her mother, she easily enough suppresses the fervent and frantic appeals he sends by return of post. I used to have a great contempt for novels of that order, but I shall respect them in future; for it seems to me you Whitethorpe people were as blind and as credulous every whit as the

heroes and heroines I made bold to despise. Then old King dies at the critical moment, and the family migrates. It never occurs to young King to correspond with any of his old acquaintances, and so to arrive at the truth; and none of the rest of you, who professed so much liking for the young man, has the sense to write direct and demand what the fellow means by his abominable conduct. It all accords exactly with the accepted rules of fiction; a little common-sense is all that is wanted to sweep away your mysteries and misunderstandings, but it is not forthcoming."

"But I wrote to him," Mrs. Gordon protested with energy. "I wrote him a dreadful letter. Harry said it was too fierce, but I made him let me send it. I never got an answer. Travelling was a very different matter in those days from these, and very likely it never reached him. It is very easy for you to criticise our actions now; but you know that in life as well as in books, suspicion and distrust may spring from very little seeds. We none of us for a moment suspected the real reason of Alec's silence. I did not know it till years later."

"Yet you took it for granted that he was in fault. You preferred to lay the blame on a man you had always believed to be honourable

and worthy of trust, and who could not defend himself. It's a little way you women have."

"Ralph, don't be so cynical. Wouldn't it have been just as bad to suspect the others? Worse, indeed, for they were women, and one of them a young girl. Besides, on the face of it, Alec was to be blamed. Don't you see how natural it was to think him fickle? Men are not always all that we foolish women at first believe them."

"A Roland for my Oliver," he said, with a smile. "Well, never mind all that now. I dare say Mr. Alec deserved a good deal of what he got. We have heard the whole story; and now I want the reason, the motive."

"The motive?"

"Ouvry's motive for marrying Miss Burton. We need not waste our time with discussing the remote chance of his being in love with her, for he wasn't. Why, then, did he do it?"

"I don't know."

"Had she money?"

"None at all, I believe, except what Mr. Blake allowed her. Oh, Ralph, I hate to think about it; but you know Charlotte Blake wanted Mary Burton out of the way. Perhaps she thought that in time Alec might turn to her."

"*Her* motive is easily seen," he said contemptuously. "It was a woman's weak device

to accomplish her desire, and it would most certainly fail—as it did fail, seemingly. A man would be a fool indeed who could be blinded to that extent.”

“I think it might have succeeded—if he had come home in time. Alec King was a man who could not believe in a woman being anything but pure and good.”

“Even though she threw him over! Well, Ouvry, at least, isn’t one of those transcendental people. He is not the man to sacrifice himself out of pure good nature; and I want to know what he gained by removing this obstacle out of Miss Blake’s path?”

“I don’t know,” she said again, more faintly. “There were rumours that he had got into difficulties.”

“And the thing was hushed up on consideration of his marrying Miss Burton? You Whitethorpe people had a fine standard of morality!”

“It was only a rumour, and I never tried to find out the truth of it. It is horrible to me to live in constant suspicion. And Mary never breathed a word to me; she was very noble.”

“Ah!” he said grimly, “I shouldn’t have stopped there; I should have followed up the clue.”

"No, you would not," she contradicted him gently.

She looked at his dark face, but she knew that he would have been merciful—that somewhere within him was a strong fibre of compassion that in the end would have conquered. He was the last man to hunt another down—he who knew, by sorrowful experience, how hard it is for stumbling feet to keep the upward path.

"Was she—of course she was—unhappy?"

"There was no sacredness—there could be no love in her married life—and she must very soon have found out that she had sacrificed herself for a dream. But he was not unkind to her—you must remember that."

"He did not beat her or starve her, you mean! Of course she found out the kind service her friends had done her?"

"Alec King came home. She wrote to him, but she never saw him."

"And he didn't come to defend himself?"

"It would have been too late. I sent the letter to him after her death."

"It seems to me you all used him very badly."

"Ah, you did not know Di's mother. It was her wish. She had a noble spirit; and though she suffered a slow anguish from the time he

left her, she never complained. She did her duty faithfully; and it was not till the end, when no harm could come of it, that she wrote to him. I never knew the secrets of her married life; it was only at the last she confided in me."

"And she told you this story?"

"Very little of it. She believed, or tried to believe, to the end, that there had been some strange blunder. I suppose, in those sad years of her married life, she began to understand things more clearly. But it was from Alec himself I learned the true reason of his silence. It was the mother who wrote to him. I told you she took Charlotte's part. She told him he was standing in the way of Mary's happiness; that, but for his shadowy claim, there was a man who would come forward."

"Ouvry, of course?"

"Yes. She was a good-tempered and not over-scrupulous woman; and I think she must have persuaded herself she was speaking the truth."

"Self-deception seems to have been a sort of fine-art in your village. I confess I don't understand your ultra-magnanimity. Will you tell me how—knowing all this—you allowed this woman to come here, and encouraged Philippa Henshaw to be intimate with Di? I don't ask how, in the first instance, you came to tolerate

Ouvry ; yet, if you could do that, I dare say the rest came easy."

"How you scold ! Don't you see, I had to do it for Di's sake ? We can't choose our circumstances in life. Mine placed me here, where I might be a friend to the child. Surely you would not have me begin by telling her all this—her mother's sorrow and her father's shame ?"

"She ought not to care for him. It's preposterous."

"But she does ; and, say what you will of him, he has been a good father to her. As for Mrs. Henshaw, I can't think how she made up her mind to come ; but since she did, it was not for me to prevent her. She does not dream that I know anything of all that I have told you ; and since I couldn't very well confront her with the story, I thought the best thing I could do was to keep silence."

"She never came to see you ?"

"No. We were never great friends. And, after all, it was but a year or two of my life I spent at Whitethorpe, though it was such an eventful time. I dare say she had almost forgotten me. But she did not forbid Philippa to come."

"She knows nothing ?"

"Philippa ? Nothing, I am certain."

"And Di's peace—do you suppose it is very secure in Mrs. Henshaw's keeping?"

"She has the strongest motives for maintaining silence. And you forget how very long ago it is since all this occurred, and how easily one comes to be at home with even the uglinesses of one's past. I have never seen Charlotte Blake since I left Whitethorpe. Old Mr. Blake died soon after, leaving his affairs in the greatest confusion. His wealth turned out to be a mere fable. Afterwards I heard of Charlotte's marriage, and of her child's birth, and then of her widowhood. We had come here then, Harry and I were going to Malaga; they said it was his last chance. He had a wish to come this way, and to carry out our old dream of seeing Spain together. We got here and—you know the rest. Barbara came to me; and we just lived on, to be near where my Harry was, and partly for Mary Ouvry's sake. I was stronger then, and I was with her when Di was born. She just lived long enough to grow very fond of her. Di spent most of the first year of her life here, on the sofa beside me."

"Miss Barbara," he asked after a pause, "how much does she know?"

"No one could have mistaken Mary Ouvry for a happy woman. Barbara knew nothing, and for what she may have guessed, she is to

be trusted. She took wonderfully to poor Mary."

"Well, it seems to me you have kept the affair pretty close; and I see no reason why any knowledge of it should reach Di, if Mrs. Henshaw can be made to give up her cherished habit of dropping vague hints."

"There is Alec King."

"Oh, so there's Alec King! And how much is he likely to tell, if he turns up next?"

"Nothing to hurt Di. Can't you understand, Ralph? he was like Mary; and, besides, he knows only half the story."

"They were a precious pair of quixotic young — There, why do you look at me like that? Don't you know that I must abuse somebody? Well, I'll take myself off and get it out alone."

"Ralph," she said, "come here."

He went to her and took her hand.

"You must trust me," he said. "You think I feel nothing."

"I know what you feel," she said gently.

"Haven't I felt it myself?"

"And yet you kept silence all these years."

"It may have been cowardly to keep silence; it may have been encouraging wrong. I don't know, but there are so many to think of. I did it for the best."

"I did not mean to scold you," he said, with a smile.

"I know that. It would be easier to bear wrong if we could always speak out our feelings about it, but there are so many whom that would hurt."

"That is putting tenderness before truth."

"Perhaps it is. I can't argue, but I know that we can't each of us lay claim to the whole list of moral virtues, and I must choose to follow the leading of the one that seems to be the least harmful to others. I can do no good by preaching to Mr. Ouvry, but if by my silence I can shield Di, who has done no wrong—— Oh, Ralph, you will think of her? He is her father, and she is dear to him." He gave a little impatient movement; but she held his hand in her firm clasp.

"Coldness to him would pain her; and, as for Philippa's mother, let Di keep her innocence of evil."

"You may trust me," he said. "I suppose one must consent to forget it, for her sake. I had to know it—if only that I might keep all knowledge of it from her, and besides——"

"And, besides, you love her; as we all do."

CHAPTER IV.

"L'Amour, vous le savez, cause une peine extrême."

It was with this story fresh in his mind that he went to Granada. He had a burning desire to face the two people who had conspired long ago to break a girl's heart. He might let no words pass his lips, but it seemed to him as if the fire in his eyes must scorch them.

In his scathing contempt he judged too hardly both the doers of this long-forgotten deed. He pictured them plotting it in cold blood. He did not consider how rarely our acts are the result of any subtle and careful calculation; how much more often they are the offspring of a momentary impulse, yielded to in haste. Mrs. Henshaw had long ago forgiven herself for her share in the transaction; more than this, she had persuaded herself that it was she who had paid the whole price of sorrow. She had staked her all, and she had lost. By degrees the past had come to wear this one

aspect. She would have denied with indignant anger that she had defrauded another of the love that was her due ; it was she, rather, to whom love had been false. She had done nothing. In a literal sense this was true. It was the mother who, jealous for her child, had written the words of dismissal, and suppressed Alec King's remonstrances ; who had pointed out that she was doing Mary Burton the truest kindness in freeing her from ties that might have grown irksome, and providing her with a suitable husband. Charlotte Blake had been passive, had allowed herself to be led without protest by the stronger will ; and to one of her fibre this silent consent took no look of a sin. Sins in her eyes were those large breaches of the law against which the commandments speak out broadly, and from which she prayed Sunday by Sunday to be delivered. If she held herself to be guilty, could she have come to Madrid, into the presence of the only person who shared her secret ? Certainly Mr. Ouvry, in that soft voice of his, could make her uncomfortable at times ; but she quickly recovered, with the self-justification that he had more to remember than she.

These excuses or palliations were not at all likely to occur to Malleson, at least while his wrath burned hot. It was with Mrs. Henshaw

he was chiefly occupied. That a man should give his vices full swing, and yield to the basest and paltriest promptings was nothing so new ; but a woman—woman to whom man looks up as to something beyond himself, as set above gross sin and temptation, living in an air purer than he breathes—— And it was into this woman's care and keeping that Di was to be given.

Full of such burdening thoughts, he climbed the hill that winds steeply under the arching elms. Hardly a ray of silver pierced the green canopy ; the time of nightingales was not yet. He did not notice the beauty of the night ; its intense stillness served only to accentuate his anger. There was nothing to distract it. It was only when he had breasted the slope and neared the end of his walk that he reminded himself he had not come on any mission of vengeance, but only to say good-bye to a young person whom he chose to call his ward, and that it behoved him to look a little less grim unless he would frighten her.

He had but a moment emerged from the shadow of the trees when he saw a white figure before him, flitting about in the moonlight with a certain graceful and rhythmic motion. He was instinctively reminded of the weird German legend of the dead dancers. The time

and the place lent themselves to this uncanny fancy.

"Di!" he called out. "Come here, you will-o'-the-wisp."

The dancer paused, and then advanced slowly towards him. It was not Di; it was, as he saw in a moment, Philippa.

"I was trying to remember a step I saw the peasants dancing," she said. "We didn't expect you so soon."

"I took you for one of the Willis' maidens."

"Who were they?"

"Young ladies who died before they had secured a husband."

She looked at him for a moment, but she made no direct answer. She was so pretty in her white summer robes that she might have softened a harder heart than his; but he was in no mood to be mollified by gracious looks, especially when these came from Mrs. Henshaw's daughter.

"I was lonely," she remarked, "and did it to keep up my spirits."

"Why are you alone? Where is Di? I think she might have come to meet me."

"She has a headache," Philippa answered, "and she is lying down. She has been on the sofa all the afternoon, or I dare say she would have met you."

"A headache! I never knew her to be afflicted with fine-lady complaints. What have you been doing to her?"

He turned on her almost roughly. He felt that he was bearish, unkind, unjust—that he was visiting his anger on the wrong person; but for the moment he could not disassociate Philippa from her mother.

"I think you are hard," she said, in a voice that vibrated with some suppressed feeling. "What have we done that you should mistrust us as you do, and misconstrue all our actions? You speak as if you thought we meant to hurt Di—to do her a wrong!"

Her tone surprised him. He had not expected her to answer like this. He had no clue to the circumstances that prompted her words, and he found nothing to reply.

"Any one who proposed to do that would have to reckon with me," he said as carelessly as he could.

"She is well off to have such a champion." She spoke in all earnestness.

"She has nobody else, you see; that is why I am so fierce in her cause. And where is Master Felix? Has he got a headache, too?"

"I don't know where he is. He is out walking somewhere, I think." There was a measure of reserve in her voice. "Haven't you brought

any news?" she asked, as if hasting from an unwelcome topic.

"A lovers' quarrel," he thought; but he answered aloud, "News? Yes. You are deeply interested in the elections, of course; so you will be glad to hear that the minimum age of voters has been reduced to twenty-one years, so that the advocates of the Federal Republic——"

"Oh, politics! I think you had better not waste all that on me. Mr. Ouvry will be a much better listener; he has done nothing but read newspapers since we came. Come in; they will all be delighted to see you. I'll tell Di you are here."

As she had said, they were all delighted to see him; and, had he been in a more genial frame, he might have felt flattered by the warmth of his reception. Philippa walked in before him. "Here is Mr. Malleeson," she said laconically.

She stood aside, but he had barely crossed the threshold when Mrs. Henshaw rose gracefully to meet him. She took him by both hands.

"I knew you would come!" she exclaimed. "Nobody ever refuses me. I knew one of my little notes would bring you."

"Oh yes, it brought me," he said civilly; "that and other things."

"The other things being Di," said Philippa, smiling at him. "Mamma, Mr. Malleson thinks Di must stand in need of his championship."

"She is to be envied in having such a faithful friend," said the lady, smiling sweetly; "go and tell her, my dear, that Mr. Malleson is here. I dare say she will join us now."

Mr. Ouvry button-holed the new-comer, and drew him into one of the windows.

"I've been longing for a talk," he said in tones that were for him enthusiastic. "For a little sense——" He glanced behind him, and raised his delicate eyebrows with a significant air. "You heard Castelar on the Abolition Bill, of course? That was an opportunity to envy him. It is honour enough for a lifetime, if he had never uttered another word."

"I think I'll go and wash off the stains of travel," said Malleson, breaking away. "And perhaps Mrs. Henshaw will order some supper."

"I'll choose a delightful little meal," she said graciously. "I always take great pains for my favourites, and Di shall tell me what you like best."

When he was alone in his room he laughed aloud in derision of himself. He had imagined he should abash them with the anger of his eyes; and they only wondered if he felt tired, or if his head ached with the rattling of the

train, and wasn't he glad to leave Madrid? And one of them had talked admiringly and with envy of another's opportunities for the pleading of a righteous cause. He shrugged his shoulders.

"I set it down

That one may smile, and smile and be a villain,"

he said to himself between the applications of cold water and fierce towelling. He forgot to reckon that Mr. Ouvry failed to look upon himself as a dishonoured man, who ought to quail before the glance of his fellows. The story was new to Malleson, but it was twenty-five years old and more to Mr. Ouvry, and in a quarter of a century one has time to get over a good deal of ashamed feeling.

When he went down again the supper was ready for him, but no Di was there.

"She sends you her love," said Philippa, answering his disappointed glance round the room; "and she will see you to-morrow."

"What a pity she has a headache to-night, of all nights! It is the heat. I suffer just the same way myself; I have to take the greatest precautions. Did you take her my smelling salts, Philippa? It's a cold welcome for you, Mr. Malleson; Mr. Chester absent, too! We must keep some supper for him, poor fellow!"

"Where is Felix, then?"

"He has deserted us—really quite forsaken us all day long. Perhaps he is tired of us!" said Mrs. Henshaw archly.

Malleson privately thought it extremely probable.

"He's writing sonnets to the moon, no doubt; these young fellows are so romantic." Mr. Ouvry smiled indulgently.

"What is all this about the action of the *ayuntamientos* in Estremadura, this attempt at repartition? Doing it to save the Assembly the trouble, they will say, eh?" He turned to Malleson.

"There is something to be said on their side. They are ground to the earth with the contributions demanded by the State; while the men who hadn't an ochavito to bless themselves with before the sequestration of the monastic lands are rolling in wealth. Look at Rivero; where was he, even three years ago?"


They plunged into the topics that were the talk of the day. Malleson was full of fierce party spirit that night, and roundly abused the other side. He felt that it was his only safety; it gave an escape valve to his wrath, and it kept him from subjects more full of danger. For the sake of Di upstairs, for the sake of his promise, he must hide his knowledge in his heart and make no sign. Framing an excuse of business

still to be done, he went early to his room. He noticed that they had put him into one adjoining that which Felix occupied. The door of communication was open, and some of that young man's possessions were strewed about. He appropriated a pair of slippers, and lit his pipe. He determined to wait for the lad ; the sight of his bright face would do him good. Clearing a little space on the table, littered with books and maps and other articles less conducive to study, he drew forward the ink and began to write to save himself from taking too poor a view of human nature. But the article which was to be contributed to an English magazine did not prosper ; it dragged heavily, and might certainly be charged with the crime of dulness. Presently he threw down the pen and began to think what he could best do for Di ; and whether even now, at this late hour, he might not claim her and so for ever make it his right to stand between her and the buffets of the world. It was a thought that had lurked in his mind all day as he journeyed south, but he had not given it permission to come boldly forward till now.

He had wanted her to have her chances. It was right and fair that every creature should have his honest share of chances in this life, where happiness is so insecure a possession. She ought to have time to choose—time to know the

secret of her own heart. But now he had to think what would be best and securest for her. He was a long time in making up his mind ; he tried honestly to put himself and his desires out of the question altogether, and to think only of her good ; but when he succeeded in the end in assuring himself that to claim her was the only way to keep her innocent of her father's past, he was conscious of a great exhilaration. No more boiling over of virtuous indignation ; no more dark schemes of playing the part of an avenging Nemesis. He, too, was about to have his chances, and something told him that this time, after her many frowns, Fortune would smile on him. He even began to sing snatches of song, though he had less music in him than a raven, and only refrained because the perfect stillness all about him made him suddenly aware that the household was abed.

Felix was very tardy. He looked at his watch. It was one o'clock, and only those late revellers, the nightingales, were abroad. In his own new-born and full content, Malleson began to pity the boy. It must be a serious affair indeed, this lovers' tiff, since it could wrest sleep from the laziest of young men. While he was thinking of consoling phrases he heard the step he waited for. Felix let himself in, and came upstairs heavily, quite reckless of other people's slumber.



"Well, old fellow!" said Malleson, bent on being cheerful.

"Well," said Felix, in his turn; and it is impossible to express the amount of gloom conveyed in this little word.

"I waited up for you," Malleson went on, with the most elaborate pretence of considering this a cordial welcome. "You're late. They all went off hours ago. They left some food for you, I believe."

"Food!" Felix echoed with derision. "I don't care if I never eat again!"

This, from a young man whose appetite was one of his strong points, could not be received in silence.

"What is it?" said Malleson, going up and laying his hand on the other's shoulder. "You've had a—quarrel, eh? Well, cheer up. I've seen the young lady, and I fancy she is penitent."

"You've seen her?"

"Certainly. I had the pleasure of her company all the evening. I thought she was a little bit dull; so cheer up, you'll make it up tomorrow." In his heart he was not sorry that the two had fallen out. It was time the boy made an end of this fooling. Malleson took cynical views at this time of every woman but one. "You'll come out of it all right, you know."

"Come out of it!" Felix turned on him fiercely. "You don't know what you are talking about. I tell you she has refused me."

Malleson gave vent to a low whistle of astonishment. He had not looked for anything so good as this. He was inhuman enough to rejoice in secret over his friend's blighted hopes. So that was the meaning of Miss Philippa's strange humour!

"Refused you!"

"Well, aren't my words plain enough? Hers were. She would have none of me; and she was right enough," he said, with a sudden change to dejection. "I'm not worthy to brush the dust off her shoes." He flung himself on the bed and hid his face.

"She has played a nice little game with you," said Malleson, thinking to be consolatory. "My dear boy, you are well out of this. "She's not good enough for you. You'll think so too, after a bit, when you have got over this." He could hardly have shot more amiss, since what sufferer from this disease ever thanked you for prophesying his recovery?

"Played with me! not worthy of me! Confound you, how dare you talk like that?" said Felix, looking up and glaring at him. "You insult her. You, who thought nothing too good for her."

"I?" said Malleson, mildly astonished, but prepared to be a model of patience and forbearance. "I don't remember. Of course I have always admired Miss Henshaw; any one with two eyes in his head can see that she is uncommonly pretty, and——"

"Miss Henshaw!" said Felix with weary impatience, turning away his head. "What has she got to do with it?"

"I thought she had everything to do with it." He spoke quietly, but a sudden dark doubt entered his mind.

"She?" Felix may, under the circumstances, be pardoned the scornful emphasis he laid on the word. "As if they were to be compared! As if there was any one in all the world to be compared with her! Oh, my love, you would not look at me—you would not listen!" He dropped his face in his hands again with a groan. Be it remembered he was very young, and that he was not quite without precedent in concluding that he had bidden farewell to all life's joys.

"Who are you talking about?" said Ralph sternly.

"I am talking about Miss Ouvry. You will please to speak respectfully of her in future," said the boy hotly.

Malleson had a horrible prevision that he

should hear this name; and yet, when it was spoken aloud, it sent the blood back to his heart and set his pulses leaping.

"Look here," he said; and this time it was his turn to be grim. He went and shook Felix roughly by the shoulder. "Listen!" he said; "I don't pretend to understand your tactics, but it seems to me you have behaved abominably. Do you call it the part of a gentleman to play fast and loose like that? To pay such notorious attentions to one girl, that your names are on everybody's lips, and then to turn about and go with your shallow pretence of love to another?"

"Pooh! what is the use of talking like that?" said Felix impatiently. "You are only wasting your breath. Love! What do you know about it!" Even in his rage, disappointment, despair, he found time to smile with derision at the thought of the cold-blooded and cynical Ralph instructing him in the ways of the heart. "I never loved but one woman in my life. I never loved till I knew her, and now I must go away; I must do without her."

"Do without her? I should think so!" Malleeson spoke with deep anger as he paced the room. Here was no laughing matter, indeed; there was nothing comic in this returning of his own tremors, his own doubts and hesitations upon him. "What right had you to expect so great a

blessing? You who saw her for the first time a month ago? What have you done that she should put such a treasure in your hands?"

"I know it," said Felix brokenly, with another swift change to humility. Had he not already spent some dismal hours facing his own shortcomings, holding audience with his failures? "But I meant to be worthy of her, it would have been something to live for, and now——"

"And now you will find a new object in life. You will probably find consolation not so difficult," said Ralph with biting sarcasm. "A week or two, and we shall have you raving over some new fancy."

Felix looked up at him with dull eyes, he did not break out into recrimination.

"You don't understand," he said with a certain odd simplicity; "you think it is like the other times."

"I think it is very probably like the other times."

"It is not. I tell you I shall never care for any one again. Never!"

"I have heard all that before."

"And Ralph," he went on, too much absorbed by his own needs to resent this insinuation, "there's something more; you can help me, you alone."

"Oh yes, I suppose you expect me to go and

plead your cause, to tell her what an excellent, steadfast, faithful young man you are, and to beg her to accept the honour you are doing her."

"It is for her sake. I'm thinking of her alone." Felix did not seem to hear the scathing words thrown at him. "She would not listen to me; she would not let me speak; but she could not hinder the sadness of her eyes. Ralph, I solemnly believe she returns my love!" he cried. "Do you suppose I would have gone to her if I had not had reason to hope?"

"No doubt you find it difficult to believe so fine a gentleman could be rejected."

"It is too hard, too hard, to think that I may lose her for some foolish, tender little scruple on her part. If you will ask her; if she tells you what she told me; if she forbids you to speak for me, then I will understand. I will accept my lot as bravely as I may. She believes in you."

"Oh, so she believes in me!" said Malleson bitterly.

"She will answer anything you ask her. If it is to be no, I will go away and never trouble her again, and make the best I can of what life is left me."

"So I am to be the go-between? I'm to play the benevolent friend, am I! I tell you, I'll do nothing for you—nothing at all," the other

answered with sudden passion. "Haven't you done mischief enough already? I tell you I won't have her disturbed. What right had you to make her grieve, even for a moment?"

"I had the right that every man has to ask the woman he has chosen out of all the world to share his life," said Felix with some manliness. He stood up and pushed the hair from his brow. "I thought you would have understood," he went on, with a boyish yearning for sympathy; "but I dare say I'm very dull company. I'm best alone, so I'll say good night."

He shut the door, and left his cousin to his own reflections.

It has probably been noticed by us all how fleetly and trippingly our theory foots it, while our laggard practice limps behind. Where was now this philosophic and beautiful doctrine of fair play—of allowing to every man his honest due of chances? Some moments of the long hours, which he certainly did not give to sleep, Ralph Malleson may have devoted to a search after this vanished ideal.

Here was a fine complication, indeed, and a pleasant beginning to a little holiday. By way of making things smoother, Felix had taken himself off at early dawn, leaving the burden of explanation to his neighbour. About

the time that Ralph was preparing in no very gentle humour to face the demands of the new day, Philippa stole softly to her friend's room.

"Are you awake, Di?" she called out; but when she turned the handle and peeped in, she saw that Di was kneeling with her face hidden. She did not like the sight; she would better have liked to find her crying, sulking, writing dolefully in her diary, in any mood, in any attitude rather than this. She would have gone away, but at that instant Di rose with a serene face.

"Is your—— Are you better?" Philippa stammered.

"Oh yes, I'm better," said Di. She could return Philippa's troubled glances with the clearest candour, for she had done her no wrong.

"I thought you might like breakfast in bed."

"Oh no; I hate that—half the coffee is spilt, and the crumbs get up your sleeve. Besides, I want to see Ralph."

There were no confidences given or received—the time for these was over; but Philippa was very solicitous about her friend's headache.

"You are sure it is quite gone?" she asked more than once, as they went downstairs arm in arm.

Breakfast was not a comfortable meal;

tempers and feelings had suffered, and even the fare, excellent as it was, failed to soothe them. Mr. Ouvry, whose blandness might have served as oil on troubled waters, had chosen prudently to take his meal alone. If we English were wise, we should taboo the family breakfast, and postpone our assembling until the first burdening hours of the day had been outlived. Some asperity, some ill-humour, some dismal views of life might be spared us if we each consented to banishment, say, till noon.

Mrs. Henshaw was too wedded to insular prejudices to yield to such a suggestion. She presided, in correct morning costume, at the head of the board; but a cloud sat on her handsome face as she dispensed the steaming coffee.

"I really think Mr. Chester is behaving very oddly," she said, her grievance peeping forth. "I trust nothing has happened to him. It is so annoying, when we meant to leave to-night. You did not hear him say where he was going?" She turned to Di. "You were the last to see him, Philippa tells me."

"He did not speak of going anywhere."

"It was very inconsiderate, I must say, not even to leave a message or a note! You were all in the Alhambra together, and you came back without him!"

"Nobody had him in charge," said Philippa, elevating her chin; "he is old enough to go without leading-strings, I suppose."

"But never to return! I can't understand it!" She looked oddly at Di.

"Perhaps he came back without our hearing him. I dreamt of footsteps in the night." Philippa glanced meaningly at Malleeson, who did not accept the hint.

The boy might get out of the scrape for himself, he should not help him. All morning he was furtively watching Di. In spite of her cheerful greeting, he kept a jealous outlook for any shadow that might cross her face. It was all nonsense—a piece of boyish vanity on the part of Felix—that her "no" had been reluctantly given. She was only vexed, as any nice girl would be, to disappoint the hopes built on her consent. He told himself this over and over again, yet he kept watching her.

Mrs. Henshaw was proposing a relief party to go in search of the missing youth, when a waiter entered with a note.

She took it, and read it with a darkening brow.

"It's what I call very bad treatment. But then, young men are so impulsive; and we can go to-night all the same," she said, in that irritating way some people have of making a

commentary on any bit of news before presenting you with the text.

"What has he done, mamma?" said Philippa lightly. "Run away with somebody, or joined the Church of Rome, or set out to find the North Pole? Do relieve our minds."

"He says he hopes to join us at Cadiz. We shall certainly not wait for him."

"Then nothing tragic has befallen him after all?" Philippa forebore to glance at Di.

"Oh dear, no; merely a little whim. I shall write and tell him we are all dreadfully angry with him for deserting us."

She read the note aloud. It was a very creditable performance, and not much more illegible than usual.

Felix, with many apologies, announced that he had met a young American, who had persuaded him to do a little bit of mountaineering. He would pick up his luggage on the way back, and hoped to join them at Cadiz in time to take his passage with them; but they must on no account linger for him, as there was nothing you could so safely count on as delays and hindrances, his friend assured him, etc., etc.

"He doesn't mention the name of his friend."

"Mrs. St. John and all her party went off to Seville yesterday," said Philippa, answering her mother's unspoken thought. Whoever

might be sharing Felix's woes it certainly was not the unfortunate Mr. Meyers.

"We might wait a day longer at Cadiz. It is a pretty place, I believe; and you could retrim my bonnet, Philippa. Blake has such clumsy fingers."

Malleson suggested that the steamer was hardly likely to delay its sailing for the convenience of the most enthusiastic mountaineer, but there were three out of the four persons present who knew very well that, however long the day of grace given him, Felix would not sail with them for England.

Were there ever hours that crept and crawled more tediously than those that divided this morning meal from that late one, taken in haste and in moonlight, before they all started to go downwards for a last time under the sombre arching elms?

Malleson's energy, indeed, was a thing to marvel at. It was hot, but for once he was too restless to lounge as Mr. Ouvry did, now sleeping, now stimulated to gentle excitement by the columns of the *Times*. He took the girls everywhere.

"You know you are just in the way when there is packing to be done," he said; "it is all a mistake if you imagine yourselves of any use." He swept them off impetuously to the little town

lying beneath them. He took them to the Cartuja, among the snuffy monks ; to the Zacatin and the bazaars ; then he whisked them away to the Alameda, to show themselves off among the southern beauties. He could not bear to let Di out of his sight. Never before had her words and looks been watched and weighed as they were now. How much did this abstracted pause mean, and what interpretation was to be put upon her silence ? She was never a person of a great flow of words, and to-day her laughter did not seem less spontaneous. He himself appeared to be in high spirits ; there was something grimly amusing, for instance, in the thought of that little commission Felix had given him. He was to reason with her, and to persuade her, was he ? She would only smile at him for his pains. Yet all the while he kept watching for a sign, and there was none given him. Di, after a little, became gay in her turn. She entered with spirit into all his proposals, and laughed at all his jokes. Only when it was suggested that they should visit the gipsy quarter, and have their fortunes told, she hung back, and would have nothing to do with this plan.

“ So you don't want to know your fate ! ” said Philippa with a laugh. “ The gipsies don't know everything, to be sure ! ”

Late at night, when they took their places in the diligence for Rio Frio, he boldly announced that he meant to take Di with him in the coupé, and this time there was no question of disagreement. Everybody thought it a very natural arrangement, and Mrs. Henshaw indulged in some mysterious smiles and nods.

"Are you sure you have plenty of wraps, my dear? Do let me lend you my tartan shawl," she said sweetly.

But Di looked down from her high perch, and said that she was quite warm and very comfortable.

Malleson took care that she was well protected from the cold; but he was very silent as they rattled through the steets of sleeping Loja, and then out into the still country under the fading stars. All his forced gaiety had deserted him. It was no part of his plan now to speak the words that would have leapt out so boldly but for Felix's folly. In his heart he cherished deep anger against the boy; but, in spite of his efforts to scorn them and make light of them, to brush them aside from his mind, certain words of his rang in his ears.

"I solemnly believe that she returns my love."

Until he had made quite sure that this was only an impertinent and conceited fancy, born

of desire, how could he make any plea for himself?

Di was very quiet, too, and made as though she slept. She had taken off her hat, and tied a little shawl about her head, and was leaning wearily enough against the leather hood. One might have thought they had quarrelled—so silent were they both; and all the while the mules rushed on, and the mayoral rushed beside them with strange yells and whoops, and much brandishing of a whip. There was no glass, and the great hood hardly kept out the air, growing keener now, for, though the moon still hung pale and wan in the heavens, there were mists and “dim red dreams” of dawn in the east, and stirrings among the shadowy trees as if the night’s silence were over.

Malleson stooped to draw a rug closer about his companion, and then something arrested his hand, for even in the imperfect light he could see that Di was crying quietly. There was no mistaking this dumb language; here, surely, he had touched on the skirts of the discovery he had been so keen and yet so fearful to make. It was a bitter moment, perhaps the bitterest of all, and every one of those gentle tears that were “such clear reporters of the heart,” was like a stab, for he knew that his hour for renunciation had come.

It was a long time before he made any other movement. By-and-by, prompted by I know not what impulse, he took out his pocket-book, and drew a little paper from it. Di sat up and looked out.

"What are those lights?" she asked.

"Rio Frio; we shall be there immediately."

"Is that where we stop?"

"Yes, the train is waiting for us."

"I'm sorry," she said with a half sigh.

"I have a message for you which I forgot to deliver," he said.

"A message for me?" He could see her colour rise.

"From Mrs. Gordon," he said carelessly. "She entrusted me with this for you." He handed her the paper.

She took it curiously, and bending to the broadening light opened it. In a fine Italian hand, the ink faded and yellow, an address was written.

"Who is Mr. King?" she asked, looking up greatly surprised.

"He is a friend of your mother's, my dear; he knew her long ago, when she was a girl like you. She left this for you." He spoke with great gentleness. His heart was stirred when he thought of the dead woman who had also learnt the hard lesson of renunciation.

"For me—mamma left it for me?"

"She thought that perhaps some day you might want a friend—some one whom you could trust, some one who would love you for her sake. If ever you should want such a friend you will find him in this man. He lives in England, at this address."

"Is this mamma's writing?" she asked, still examining the paper wonderingly.

"Yes."

"I have no letters of hers, not any of her writing at all."

She held the precious fragment carefully. Then another thought seemed to strike her.

"How strange that mamma should have fancied that I might need a friend. I suppose she thought the padre might die too? I dare say he wanted to die when she left him; but then I have you, I should always have you, Ralph."

"Oh yes, you can always have me."

"But I am glad to have this bit of paper, too. Some day I should like to see this Mr. King very much. Does the padre know him? He never spoke of him."

"I don't know," said Malleson hastily.

"Do you think I might write to him?"

"I dare say you might, when you get settled a little."

They had reached Rio Frio, and there was the

bustle of getting into the train, and no more quiet moments. His chance of talk with Di ended with this night journey; for, though they lingered in Seville and again in Cadiz, Mrs. St. John and her escort were in both places, ready to seize on them, and Mrs. Henshaw, with faint protest, let herself be drawn into the whirl of sight-seeing and pleasure. Ralph was busy with affairs of his own, but Herr von Rosen was an irreproachable cavalier, and showed a commendable desire to improve his English accent.

The steamer they had timed themselves to catch sailed without them to British shores; but, though long days went by before the next one claimed them, no Felix appeared.

Perhaps it was this failure on his part to keep his tryst that made Mrs. Henshaw wear so unamiable a face, when at last the ladies had stepped on board and were listening to the final farewells of the gentlemen.

"You'll take care of my little girl, and send her safely back to me?" It was Di's father who was the speaker, and his voice was very soft.

"I wonder, I must say, that you care to send her to England."

Malleson, who was standing near, turned sharply on his heel and heard no more.

Philippa was listening with a heartless smile

to Herr von Rosen's sentimental regrets, while the unhappy Mr. Meyers nursed his woe at a respectful distance.

"Poor wretch!" thought Ralph contemptuously, "is he so blind?" It would be his own turn next for those brave smiles and arch glances. He had said good-bye to Di already. "You will come to London?" she had asked wistfully, and he had promised that if she needed him he would go; that at least was left to him, to be her friend in need. But he had still his adieus to make to one person, and his word to say—a word of warning, should it be?

"Di will not be quite without friends in England," he said, looking into Mrs. Henshaw's disturbed face.

"I will hand her over to her cousin when we get to London. You may trust me to take care of her," she assured him. "I know how anxious you must feel—so natural in the circumstances; but I will look upon her as my child—I will be a mother to her."

Malleson checked her with a little movement of his hand.

"I was not speaking of her cousin," he said. "I have given her the address of an old and dear friend of her mother's—Mr. Alec King."

It was cruel, perhaps, and unmanly to read so coldly the quick changes in her expression, but

he had Di to think of. He knew very well, he could read it in the sudden anger of her eyes, that the lady would never forgive him his knowledge of that name; but what of that? It was for Di; it was all he could do for her, he told himself vehemently, as he stood on the quay at her father's side, while she went sailing away in the blue distance; it was all he could do for her, though night and day he remembered how he had surprised her silent tears.

CHAPTER V.

"For stony limits cannot hold out love."

"AND how do you like it?"

They were talking of England, and it was Miss Bell Fullarton who put this question to Di. It said something for her freedom from prejudice that she had waited a whole fortnight before asking it.

"I think it is splendid," said Di rashly, unaware that her praise was not welcome. "It is much grander than I expected; and it is all so different from home."

"Ah, yes, very likely. Of course you must be glad of a change, but wait till you have seen Scotland. If you think so much of England, you won't have words enough for the north. We'll go there in a few weeks now."

"It's very far away, isn't it?" said Di doubtfully. In spite of her enjoyment she felt like a tethered bird: the further her wanderings, the more certain she was to feel the jerk of the string that pulled her homewards. She

had not forgotten that night on which she had first heard of Bell's fair island on the far north seas ; but where was the glamour, where the enchantment now ?

"Far enough for you to forget all this," said Bell energetically. "England is very well in its way ; it has some few advantages, perhaps. I don't object to it for a little. It is very well to contrast your own country with another sometimes."

"That is what I say," murmured madame. "To hear how one's country is spoken of abroad, that is a thing to make you not quite so proud of your superior virtue."

"The French can have no ill words for Scotland," said this fierce patriot, looking sternly at her friend. "They appreciate us, they respect us, they are proud to claim us as allies."

"Ah," said madame lightly, "we will take the history another time, my dear." She knew very well what was coming, and she was not unwilling to spare Di an occasional harangue.

What Bell might have answered remains unknown, for at that moment the door was opened, and Philippa was announced.

Di sprang forward with a little exclamation. She could hardly have explained why she was so glad to see Philippa, but in a minute her arms were round the other's neck.

"Oh, how good of you to come! Bell is always ready for visitors," she said, silencing Philippa's graceful apologies for the earliness of the hour. She was placed in a big chair, relieved of her sealskin, and introduced to the other ladies all in a breath.

"Now begin and tell me everything," said Di, seating herself on the fender-stool. The early summer was cold, and there was a little glow of burning coal.

"What a big commission!" said Philippa, laughing. "There is nothing to tell. Things don't happen here so fast as in Madrid. Mamma and I have been pulling about the furniture, and making ourselves acquainted with the amount of damage our possessions have sustained. It's not lively work, counting cracked tea-cups. I don't think we have done much else, except grumble and wish ourselves anywhere else."

"Perhaps you don't like living in London?"

"I should put it much less mildly than that." She turned her blue eyes frankly on Bell. "I'm not at all a lover of my country; I like other people's countries much better."

"Poor Bell! you are the only patriot," said Di, with a smile.

"Ah, have I made a mistake?" said Philippa gently.

"Yes," said Di mischievously; "more than a mistake. You ought to think the sound of Bow Bells the most beautiful music in the world. It ought to stir up something in your heart, and make you thankful you were born a British child."

"But I have been born ever so often since my baby days. The mere accident of having begun life on English soil ought not to count."

"Ah, that is so true," murmured madame, recognizing here a kindred spirit.

"Bits of me came to life in France, and bits in Italy or Germany."

"And in Spain?" Di questioned, with a sudden anxiety.

"Well, perhaps just some trifling morsels," said Philippa, with a smile. "So you see"—she turned to Bell—"England treated me like a step-child, and turned me over to foreign nurses; and I don't love her any more than one loves a step-mamma in general."

"I don't expect every one to agree with me," said Bell stiffly.

She thought all this very frivolous, if it was not downright wicked. If living out of your country made you talk like this, it was well to stay at home.

"You will stay to lunch?" She gave the

invitation very politely; and Philippa accepted it readily.

"I am glad to escape our broken china for a little," she said. "If my home were like this, I should learn to love London too."

Bell had a fixed theory about hospitality: it was a national virtue, and therefore to be practised even towards an enemy. She made up her mind very quickly that Philippa was "not nice"—in the full sense of that comprehensive feminine phrase—nevertheless she went forth to order extra chops and a more seductive pudding. While she was absent superintending the preparations, the others drew a little closer round the fire with a sensible air of relief. Your very virtuous person is apt to be an uncomfortable companion. A smack of Bohemia stole into the talk. In ten minutes Philippa had heard all about M. Adolphe, and had gladdened madame's heart by her praise of Paris.

"And now for your news," she said at last, turning to Di.

"I have none, except a letter from Miss Piper."

"Is the great feud made up?"

Di shook her head.

"You don't know Miss Barbara."

"I think I know as much as I want to know. Shall I write to her, Di?"

"It would have been better to speak," said Di, remembering a promise that had remained unfulfilled. "Letters never explain what you mean."

"Then I'll go back on purpose. It will be a good excuse to return to that happy land."

"I hear from Ralph too, of course. You don't care to see the *Imparcial*, I suppose?"

"Well, no, I think not," said Philippa, with twinkling eyes; "unless it contains any very harrowing particulars, and then you would have to translate them. There's nothing about two rash young men lost in the snow, is there?"

"Why should you think of such dismal things?" said madame; then she noticed Di's face. "Even in England it has ceased to snow," she said.

"Oh, but you will always find snow on the Sierra Nevada. I have it on the authority of the guide-books. Di, don't look at me like that. I was only going to remark, that you needn't believe any sensational paragraphs you may see in the *Imparcial*."

"I was not likely to believe that."

"Nor I; because I saw one of the mountaineers yesterday."

That was all Philippa chose to impart, and Di would ask no questions. Philippa was not

in a pleasant humour. She was inclined to be satirical, and had the audacity to make gentle fun of Bell. "England and the damaged furniture had spoiled her temper," she said, as she went away.

Di hardly noticed the unevenness of her mood; she remembered little else but her sparing words about Felix. It is needless to say that she had thought a great deal about the young man to whom she had refused a hearing that balmy night in the deserted Mirador. A woman's "no" is always a very important affair to her. So much hangs on the skirts of that little word. Suppose one were to say it, and then that one were immediately assailed by unavailing regrets? That was only a hypothetical case, of course—a mere idle speculation—without bearing on the question. "Yes," is just as easily pronounced; but what big issues it, too, carries with it! Di gave this matter its due share of pondering at night, when Bell had marched off with the candles. She never felt in the least inclined to spend her wakeful hours in reading any of the novels that had seemed such a snare to Miss Townsend. There are times when one is a hero or a heroine to oneself; when one's own woes, one's own misses in life are more absorbing than the most tragic fiction.

She had said that she found England delightful, and it was partly true. She liked to be in a whirl of sight-seeing; out and about all day long, till the roar and confusion of the endless streets deadened her senses and made her tired enough to sleep at night. She was in a feverish haste—though she never said it to herself—to gather and build up new impressions that were to shut out older ones. And now any chance meeting at a street corner might blow all this careful fabric down at a breath.

“What is this little mystery about a young man?” madame asked later, when they were for a moment alone.

She loved little mysteries about young men. They were seated by the fire; Di had a book, but it lay unread on her lap. Madame sat with her back to the light; she was doing nothing—she could do nothing very gracefully. She lifted a fire-screen and turned it about in her slim white hands. “It made me curious,” she said. “Your friend has a way of saying things that makes one listen; that is a gift.”

“You mean what Philippa was saying this morning? It was about a friend of ours, Mr. Felix Chester.”

“Yes,” said madame encouragingly, making a note of the name.

“We saw a great deal of him in Madrid.

We all went to Granada together." Di was bent on being very circumstantial. "He left us there very suddenly, to go on a little excursion to the mountains. He had a friend with him, you know; and he promised to be back in time to sail with us, but he wasn't, though we waited more than a week."

"Ah," said madame, "young men do that. It's a little way they have to prove that they are free. But you never want to assert your freedom till you have begun to lose it," she nodded her head sagaciously. "You have only to wait, and he will come back."

"He has come back. You heard Philippa say so."

"There were two mountaineers, were there not?" madame asked carelessly.

"Philippa meant Mr. Chester; we did not know the other."

Madame looked with a curious smile at the grave face, on which the firelight played.

"Is he handsome, this wayward Mr. Chester?"

"I never thought about it. I think he has a good face."

"And rich? But your Englishmen who travel are always rich."

"I suppose so," said Di, wishing madame would not ask so many questions.

"Your friend is very pretty," said the older lady softly.

"Oh yes, very pretty—very pretty indeed. I never saw any one so beautiful as Philippa, and she is nice, too," said poor Di, eager to be just. "Some day before long he will marry her, I think."

To speak the words out plainly like this, made them seem very convincing. She had an odd sensation that she was listening to some one else's summing up.

"There is something so romantic about a youthful attachment," said madame, discreetly addressing herself to the hand-screen. "But your cousin Bell—I have little hope of her." She sighed as she thought of M. Adolphe, who had not been invited to London. "She is too wise; it is not good to be so very wise."

Then Bell herself came in, and sentiment flew out of the window, which she flung open.

"You dreadful people, you are sitting in an oven," she said. "And don't you know how bad that is for your health? Di, if you are not too tired, I think we might begin our French lessons. Madame is doing nothing, and we have had such an idle day."

Di jumped up, and her book fell on the rug. Bell picked it up.

"Scott," she said approvingly, "perhaps you would rather read?"

"Then I could continue to be idle," murmured Madame Lavoisier, who loved her after-dinner ease.

"Oh no; let it be French by all means," said Di, departing to fetch the dictionary. She had a fierce longing to grapple with defaulting tenses, to insist on grasping the meaning of the most idiomatic phrases, to do something very difficult and absorbing—in short, to rebuild the wall that threatened to tumble down and lay bare the past. And all the time the invader who was to destroy these frail defences, was at the gates.

CHAPTER VI.

"And then the lover, sighing like a furnace."

ABOUT a week after the *Sevilla* had sailed for London, Felix Chester suddenly turned up in Madrid. Malleson found him buried in the depths of his own easy chair when he returned from his club, where he had dined. He would not pretend to any cordiality, when he discovered this lounging figure in possession. He was not glad; his greeting was ungracious.

"So you have come back to your right mind," he said.

"I've come back to Madrid."

"Well, I wish you wouldn't be quite so melodramatic in your manner of disappearing and turning up again. You think it amusing, I dare say, to play jack-in-the-box in this fashion; but I'm past the age for appreciating surprises."

"It's immensely entertaining. I suppose you would like to hear what a jolly, pleasant time I've had of it down there, since I left you?"

Felix leaned back in the chair, which he had not surrendered to its owner. He spoke indifferently; he no longer raged and raved; he was not even gloomy.

Malleson looked at him with a suspicious eye; he disliked this sluggish behaviour. According to all rule and precedent, Felix should have begun to discover that life had still some salt and savour. A week's solitude had worked miracles before now.

"So long as you have got over that piece of folly——" he began.

"Oh yes, I've got over it, of course. A fortnight is such a long time; isn't it?"

"About the usual time, I think," said Malleson, with great grimness.

This was too much. Felix started up and began to pace the room.

"Confound you!" he said. "It's an impertinence to hear you talk like that. As if a lifetime would be too much to serve for her! But what can you know about it?" he said, with much scorn. "You, who never had a thought beyond your precious politics. A fine mistress that, truly. And yet you talk of forgetting her, and getting over one's love for her as if it were a thing to be ashamed of. Much you know about it!"

"And pray, what do you propose to do next,

if one may ask?" said Malleson civilly, paying no heed to this outburst.

"I'll tell you." Felix seated himself astride of a chair and leaned his arms on the back. "I came to tell you I'm going to England to-night."

"Oh, indeed—to-night."

"I'm going by the north line. I'll take my chance of getting through the lines or being knocked on the head; and when I get to London I'll go to her and ask her if it was all true what she said to me that night down there. Sometimes I think I must have dreamt it——" he broke off, staring in front of him. "If it is true—well, I'll come back and volunteer for Don Carlos, and give some fellow a chance of putting an ounce of lead into me," he said, with rather a ghastly laugh. "There—you know my plans."

"Thank you very much," said Malleson, with great politeness. "Yes, I know your plans. You don't care to hear my opinion of them, I suppose?"

"Not particularly," Felix answered with great frankness. "I've made up my mind."

"Then you don't care to hear that it's generally considered a cowardly and a low thing to persecute a woman who has shown you, as plainly as possible, that your attentions are unwelcome."

"Persecute her!" Felix smiled. "Much you understand about it. It is some one else that's persecuting her, if it comes to that. I haven't got to the bottom of it yet, but there's some reason—some foolish enough reason, I dare say, but sacred to her, God bless her! that kept her from listening to me. And do you think I'm going to let a cobweb like that stand in the way of her happiness and mine, while there's a chance left of brushing it away?"

"It's a very ingenious theory, no doubt, and a fine way of saving your pride. Why can't you take her refusal like a man. Are you the first to be rejected, do you suppose? Is love the only thing in life? Are you love-sick boys to rule the world?"

"It's the only thing for me, at present."

"Go home and study mathematics," cried the much-enduring Ralph, grimly; "that's a nice, absorbing, steadying occupation for you."

Felix stared at him with a kind of sublime pity. What a poor, maimed, broken-winged sort of life a man must lead, who could calmly suggest the study of the differential calculus as a cure for the wounds of the heart!

"What a lot you have missed!" he said, in a sort of burst of compassion, looking at his cousin as if he were some new and curious variety of animal. "I'd rather be in my shoes than yours,

even though it is to be no. I'll tell you what," he went on, not waiting for any rejoinder; "if she'll have me, I'll make something of life yet. I'll begin to do something, and astonish you all. I have it in me. I never went in for the high moral line, but I have my ideas of what a man may do to make the most of his opportunities."

Malleson hardly listened to the impetuous confidences that followed. If they reached him at all, it was but as a dim echo of his own old hopes and aspirations, when he too had possessed the sublime egotism of youth. Felix brightened under the visions he was calling up; he had always been rarely frank, and not even the entire absence of sympathy could arrest the flow.

Malleson, who had seated himself again, leaned his head on his hand. He was picturing—he had thought of it to weariness—the hour when he had surprised Di checking back her sobs, hiding away the traces of her tears, lest he should read them in the breaking dawn; and all this babble in praise of work, this sudden scorn of idleness passed through his brain like the jargon of an unknown tongue.

It was hard enough, surely, that he should have to entertain this lover—now ardent and hopeful, now despairing—through the mortal hours that refused to hasten their steps and to

bring the moment of departure any nearer. Felix took it for granted, in the most exasperating way, that he was to be made welcome to house-room for himself and his complaints, and to a meal besides. For hunger, which is a very healthy symptom, began now to assert itself.

"I brought my traps round here," he explained. "It's as easy to start from here as from the 'Paris.' Suppose you ring and despatch old Anchel to the café for some supper?"

"Send for yourself; I want nothing."

"Oh, you'll have acquired an appetite by the time his old legs have trotted back," said Felix, jumping up and beginning to clear the table of its burden of books and papers. "You only want to make a beginning. As for me, I forgot to eat, I believe. I was in an awfully queer state till I had made up my mind."

The boy had always taken liberties with the older man, who had rather liked it; but it was odd that he could not see how unwelcome he was for once. Malleson grew dumb at last under the infliction, and took refuge in his pipe. Felix behaved as very young men—and some older ones—are wont to behave at certain crises of their lives. He stared for long spaces without movement into the fire; then he would burst out with hopes and doubts, plans and despondencies, all in a breath. During intervals of

melancholy and self-pity, he would consult the stars and heave profound sighs, and then again he was back at his friend's elbow, making preposterous demands on his sympathy.

Perhaps Malleson hardly believed in those vows and honest resolutions, in those assurances that the days of cakes and ale were over; more likely he never listened to them. He ate and drank but little, while Felix tossed off glass after glass of the light, thin vintage, his hopes rising every moment. Malleson had his own thoughts to face, his own warring impulses to wrestle with. While the boy talked of love with something of a new reverence and awe in his heart, the older man was busy with the same passion, only with him it was not the love that claims, but the love that renounces.

But it was not till the last moment of all that he spoke, and then with some of an Englishman's gruffness and hatred of a scene.

Felix had a carriage to himself. There were very few passengers, and they were all armed and huddled for the most part together, talking heroically and with a fine flavour of disdain of the perils in front of them, yet casting dismal backward looks that belied them. No one cared to run the blockade who could stay peacefully at home; and the Englishman who ventured unarmed was looked on as a Bedlamite. But what

are obstacles to lovers? and what are any dangers compared to that great and possible calamity of a refusal?

Felix took possession of his solitary compartment with the air of a conqueror. He refused to fortify himself with newspapers or sandwiches, a flask, or any other consolations of a traveller; he had his hopes and his fears, and these were food enough for mind and body. Up to this time nothing had been said beyond the merest commonplaces. It seemed as if Telemachus were to depart on his mission without the blessing of his old mentor. But at the last moment, when the word of warning had been given, and the little crowd was sending its shrill good wishes after the adventurers about to face unknown perils, Malleson put out his hand.

"Tell Di, from me," he said slowly, "to think of nothing—nothing at all—but the prompting of her own heart. Do you hear? Say it from me, as my wish."

Felix wrung the hand hard in both his own.

"I knew you would help me," he said, taking this last kind stroke of fortune as if it were his due. "She believes in you. She will listen if you bid her!"

Then the train sped on its northern way, and the last thing that Malleson saw was a face stretched forth from it, all irradiated with smiles;

and the last thing he heard was a strong young voice calling out audaciously, "I'll let you know of my success." The traveller took hope now as his comrade and bid defiance to his fears, for he could think of no scruple on Di's part that would fail to vanish before the wish of her old friend Ralph.

So one went on in sunshine, and the other in the shade. It was a hard thing to have done; and Malleson, as he walked home, was conscious of a certain supercilious wonder at his own act. He had so long ceased to expect anything heroic of himself, and if this was not quixotic, what, then, could be called by that name? But it was not for Felix he had done it. No, in spite of the grudging love he bore to the lad, it was not for Felix.

"He went home and threw himself in his chair. The remnants of the meal were still on the table; but the frank, persistent voice was silenced at last, and there was nothing to disturb his thinking.

But presently he gave that up too. His pen lay where he had left it, the ink hardly dry on it, and as his glance fell on it his fingers closed about it eagerly. Here was consolation at hand. He drew his books and his papers towards him, "impatient of life, patient only of work"—that faithful friend that never failed him.

CHAPTER VII.

“Oh, le bons temps ! J'étais bien malheureux !”

“Mir war's so wohl, so weh.”

DI had quickly formed a great friendship for Lady Malleson, and spent much time in the worship of the babies who had usurped Ralph's place.

The widow was a foolish and impulsive little woman, with caressing ways that were like balm after the robust and bracing sharpness of Bell's neighbourhood. Besides the babies, who came in for lavish attention, they had one subject in common, of which neither ever wearied. It was Ralph this and Ralph that, while the ladies sat contriving picturesque garments for the twins or sipping their afternoon tea ; and the mother would point out with pride that the bigger and bolder of the boys who was named after his uncle. This young gentleman was solemnly addressed a hundred times a day, and told that he must faithfully observe the ways of his name-

sake and grow up like him. Di let him take endless liberties with her hair and dress, and play the most uncomfortable gymnastics on her knee. The larger dole of ribbons and sweets, though she pretended to be severely just, went to the youngster, who had a look of the other Ralph about his baby brow.

"He was so good to me," Lady Malleson would say in her soft contralto; "and he might have been angry, you know, because it was hard on him, wasn't it?"

"Oh, I don't think he cared," said Di, tossing the smaller Ralph. "He isn't a man to covet money or titles; and for my part I think he is best as he is."

"There wasn't much money, though my boys will be better off than their father was; but he ought to have been the head of the house."


"He could never have looked for that. He must have known that his brother would marry."

"I don't think so," said the widow quickly. "Our marriage was kept a secret. I did not even know that my husband had a brother till almost the last. He never spoke of him."

"Ralph was not a brother to be ashamed of."

Di did not wish to penetrate the secrets of her friend's married life, but she was not slow to see that this was a thing to be disapproved.

"No. And you see, what with the unwelcome



surprise of a marriage, and one thing and another, I could not expect him to take kindly to me and the boys. I use to cry about it on the voyage home. I thought he would hate the boys"—she looked at the curly heads plaintively—"but you can't think how fond he was of them though they were little mites when he saw them, and gentlemen as a rule don't take to babies. He did everything for us, and settled us here."

"That was last year?"

"Yes, just after I came home. Did he tell you about us?"

"No, not then."

Di reflected that, long and well as she had known Ralph, she had heard singularly little about his family.

"He is very good to us," Lady Malleson said again. "He is always sending presents to the boys. I must show you his last gift. They use the spoons every day, don't you, my beauties?"

"Oh; I know about those. I helped to choose them." Di smiled as she remembered that far-distant day, and then she sighed.

"Of course I will consult him about their education. They must go to Eton, if we can afford it; and to Oxford, as their father and uncle did before them. Di, couldn't you persuade Ralph to come and live here? It would be such

a comfort to have him always at hand. I can't explain things in letters, you know."

"Oh no," said Di quickly. "I am sure he wouldn't come; and besides I couldn't spare him," she added, smilingly.

"But you have so many friends."

"Very few, and nobody like Ralph. Do you know a strange thing has happened? There were two people he wished me to see, here in England. You were the first."

"So he told you about us in the end?"

"Oh yes. He said I must come often. The other was a friend of my mother's—some one she knew when she was a girl. I got his address, and I was to write to him if—— I wanted very much to see him, since he had known mamma; but yesterday I saw a notice of his death in the *Times*."

"How sad! Are you quite sure it was the same?"

"Quite sure. It was the correct address, and everything. He lived in the east of England. I wanted to go even then. I thought they would let me look at him, perhaps, if I told them about his having known mamma; but Bell said it would be foolish, and could do no good. Oh, I wish I had written at once when I came!"

"It would not have been nice for you. Your cousin was quite right." Lady Malleeson, who

was timid, shuddered over the strange fancy. "You found my boys and me alive and well, at any rate; and you can tell Uncle Ralph all about us when you go back to him."

Nothing more was said then, but when the babies had been sent to the nursery, Lady Malleson began once more—

"I wish Ralph would live here. I would try to be very good to him."

"You wouldn't like his untidy ways and his pipes."

"Yes, I should. I would bear anything in that way; he deserves the best I can give him. Di, I must tell you, he did something very noble once. My husband was in trouble, and he got him out of it; he took it on himself. That was before I knew Roderick. I can't explain things, and I only know this from some letters of my husband's I have seen since he died. I was looking in his desk for some papers that were wanted, and I found these. I burnt them. No one else had any right to know about it; and it troubled me to think that I had found out a secret Roderick had not shared with me. Do you think he would have been very angry?"

"It was mean of him not to tell you."

"Di, you forget, he was my husband and the father of my children, and I loved him."

"Yes, yes," said Di quickly. "I know it

doesn't seem the same to you ; don't tell me any more." She wondered at her friend's impulse to confession. "I should have kept my husband's sins to myself," she thought, but she said nothing of this aloud.


"I told you because I thought you liked Ralph," said the little widow, sobbing now, "and I know he likes you."

"Oh, I know he does," said Di, smiling at the idea that she needed to be assured of Ralph's friendship.

"He told me so, he was always talking about you, and I thought if you could comfort him—— I and my boys have done him so much harm !"

"He couldn't be a dearer friend to me than he is," said Di, stooping to kiss the quivering lips ; "and I always knew he was the best of men. As to harm, he would laugh at you if you talked to him like that. He is as proud as you are of the boys ; and I am glad they have such a good uncle."

She did not add she was sorry they had so bad a father. She thought very poorly of the late baronet, and glorified Ralph in her heart as a saint and martyr. "I did not need her to tell me how good he was, or to urge me to care for him," she said to herself as she went home, her head erect, her eyes shining, and her lips smiling at that brave story of her friend.



It was but a step from one house to the other, and she still wore this look when she opened the drawing-room door, and found herself in a moment face to face with Felix Chester. She paused for hardly a perceptible instant, and then she went forward quietly.

"How do you do?" she said, holding out her hand.

"Quite well—oh, very well," he answered rather incoherently; and then he added something about passing through London, and wishing to know how she had stood the journey.

"It was very nice, except in the Bay of Biscay; it wasn't exactly smooth there."

"Not what you expected the sea to be?"

"Not like our plain," she answered smiling.

He wished she had not been quite so ready with her words and her smiles.

"Mr. Chester has had a much worse journey than you," said Bell, looking up from her knitting. "He has been telling us about his adventures."

"Oh, it was nothing," he said lightly. "A mere bit of bravado on the part of the insurgents—a lesson in waiting—that was all." (It had by no means seemed such a mere trifle at the time to this impatient wooer). "Your Spaniard is an entertaining creature when he is dressed in a little brief authority."

"Ah," said madame, with a little shiver, "you are well out of that barbarous land, both of you."

"We were safe enough under our national colours. Do you remember Miss Barbara's Union Jack?" he turned to Di. Then he explained to the other ladies how Mrs. Gordon had manufactured a wonderful banner, which was displayed from a window on every fresh rumour of a Carlist approach. "We were all at the making of it; the chief difficulty was to get the white band of the St. Andrew's Cross to show up properly. There would have been no virtue in the flag unless Scotland had been well represented."

"Miss Barbara is very loyal, she would please you, Bell. Did you see any of them—did you see papa?" Di asked, turning to Felix.

"No." He was ready to scourge himself for the omission. "I was only a few hours in Madrid, and I spent them with Ralph." He remembered all at once that he ought to have had a solemn interview with Mr. Ouvry. That was the thing aspirants were always supposed to do. Why had he so recklessly wasted his opportunities; why had he not cultivated that bland gentleman's society with more assiduity? He was tempted to go on the spot and procure a return ticket for Madrid.

"Ralph was well? Good old Ralph!" said Di, and a smile curled her lips again as she remembered what a hero he was.

"Yes; and hard at work, of course, as usual."

"Who is this Ralph?" said Bell, with a touch of asperity. She disliked the warmth of tone in which he was mentioned.

"Why, I have told you about him often! He is my dearest friend and brother," said Di, with shining eyes.

"And mine," cried Felix hotly. "He is the best old fellow in the world." He forgot Ralph's lukewarm reception of his tidings. He would have forgiven his cousin any coldness, since he served as such a delightful tie and common bond of union with Di.

"And he is half Scotch," said Di demurely, as if this were his crowning virtue.

"And yet he is content to live in Spain? It seems to me you are all very bad patriots over there."

"You find Scotch people everywhere," said Felix, as if he were announcing an important discovery. "There are a good lot of them in London, and they manage to rub along somehow."

"That is our revenge for Flodden," said Miss Bell promptly; and this brilliant reply deserves to be recorded as the nearest approach

to a joke ever made by this matter-of-fact young woman.

Madame smiled inwardly at the graciousness of Bell's bearing towards her guest. She shut her eyes and tried to think that it was M. Adolphe, who sat with such an air of being at home in the easy chair, and in whose honour Bell had laid aside her knitting. Alas! the elegant and chivalrous M. Adolphe would never have dared to take the liberties this young man was taking, who actually smiled at things Scotch and remained unrebuked. Bell and he, indeed, got on excellently. They were both entirely honest; and there was something direct and simple about Bell that so far counterbalanced her inability to appreciate a pleasantry, though I am aware that in this age of ours it is counted almost criminal to be without a sense of humour.

"Stay and have some tea, unless you despise tea in the afternoon?" she said, when he showed signs of taking his leave.

"I think it is a delightful institution," he said fervently; and, indeed, it was a fashion that pleased him much at the moment, since it gave him an excuse to linger.

"Ralph sent you a message; it was rather a long one. May I come another day and deliver it?" he asked boldly, as he carried off Di's cap.

It was Bell who was the first to reply. He somehow got permission without difficulty, even graciously, to come again. "We shall be very happy to see you when you have nothing better to do," she said, in her formal little way that always amused madame.

It surprised Di, when she had time to think of it, and she thought a good deal of it in the solitude of her pretty room—how easily the meeting had been got over, and how well Felix had succeeded in making a good impression on the mistress of the house;—no such simple matter for an Englishman, if you please.

"That's an intelligent young man," said madame softly. "He has been everywhere—at Kilmure, too."

"Yes," said Bell. "He knows the Hendersons, Di" (and here the secret peeped out). "I can't think how I never happened to see him there. He says he will very likely visit them this summer. He may be going about the same time we go."

"Then he will escort us," said madame graciously.

But Di had not to wait on tardy August days for further meetings. It was wonderful what a large licence the young man took to himself from Miss Bell's stiff permission, and how often he turned up in the little house at

Kensington. His excuses were Machiavellian in their ingenuity. You would have thought that he was a raw countryman of Miss Fullarton's, so eager was his thirst for sight-seeing; and as for art, it seemed as if he were left to be its sole champion.

Bell fell in quite pleasantly with all his proposals.

"Miss Ouvry hasn't seen the Dudley or the Society of British Artists," he would say quite gravely. "Don't you think we ought to go there this afternoon? It's as well to let her see these things now, for after Scotland, you know, she won't care for stuffy galleries," said this diplomatic youth.

"Certainly," she would reply with equal gravity, "by all means let us go. I wish to be quite impartial. I wish her to see everything."

She gave Ned Henderson some credit for good taste in the choice of a friend. Here was an Englishman who could in his poor way appreciate the superiority of north over south. And as for Di all this time—every one who has ever read a novel must know by heart what she felt and thought—how bitter-sweet were her reflections, how brave and how unending her battles with herself. Philippa's name was not mentioned by either of them, yet she could not but wonder where he spent the hours that were not

passed at Kensington. Did Philippa sing to him in the dull Brompton drawing-room, and did they laugh together as they used to laugh—the merry peals coming up to her as she stood alone on her high balcony above the surging crowd? She tried to remember claims older than hers—promises meant faithfully: she honestly strove to hope that Felix found the respectable Brompton mansion a sort of earthly paradise; but it was a poor, half-nourished hope at the best, and its term of life was nearly over.

On one occasion, when they had all been looking at some pictures in Bond Street, Felix persuaded the ladies to rest for half an hour in his rooms. He had some large photographs of Scotch scenery, about the mounting of which he was anxious to consult Miss Fullarton. The place was close at hand, he said, overruling all objections, and leading the way boldly. He had hinted modestly at the discomfort of a bachelor's home, but in truth the quarters were very luxurious. The large sitting-room overlooked a busy fashionable street, but it was full of subdued light, and the air was heavy with the breath of flowers, such as are not often found in a bachelor's den.

Here, too, Lady Malleson was discovered seated. She had taken off her bonnet, and looked very much at home, so perhaps this lavish and

reckless display of hothouse treasures was for her pleasure.

"I am so glad you have come," she said, seizing Di; "I thought you would never have had enough of art."

"Art has taken it out of us, at any rate. Now, you will stay and eat something before we look at the photographs? There's nothing like a picture gallery for giving one an appetite."

He went away with pretence of ordering an impromptu meal, as if they did not all know quite well that the feast was spread and waiting them in the next room.

"Come and take off your bonnets," said Lady Malleson, rising, and leading the way. "Di, you look quite pale with the heat." She lifted a flask of eau-de-Cologne, and sprinkling her fingers, touched the girl's pale cheeks softly.

"It is hot. Did you know we were coming?"

"Why, yes!" cried the little widow. "He wrote to me two days ago."

"That explains his gold-topped scent-bottles," said Bell gravely. "When will men learn that women are not all frivolous? I thought he was sensible."

"Perfume is very nice on a hot day. Don't you think so?" Lady Malleson opened her eyes very wide. She did not understand Bell's look, which said as plainly as possible, "She is

English, poor thing. English people are all so luxurious. She doesn't know any better."

"He's a charming young man," said madame, with enthusiasm; "he's quite Parisian." She put up her eyeglass and looked all round the sitting-room, to which they had returned.

"Why doesn't he hang up his soup-tureen?" Bell asked, glancing with disapproval at the bits of china suspended on the walls. "I suppose you will go into raptures over that terracotta vase; but it looks to me like nothing else so much as the section of a drain-pipe."

Felix came back presently and marshalled them into the dining-room. He neglected Lady Malleson, and devoted his whole attention to Bell. Madame Lavoisier was occupied in approving of the many little dishes, dainty and delicate. "None of your big English roasts, all raw and red," she remarked afterwards. It was a banquet arranged after a fashion that would not have disgraced a Frenchman. Di and her friend were deep in discourse about the babies; the mother describing with pardonable pride their latest accomplishments, so that Bell had a clear field, and was able to give this Englishman much valuable advice.

Afterwards he showed them his little collection with hospitable grace. It was a curious medley, and might have passed for a record of many

fleeting fancies, hotly pursued and soon abandoned. There were relics of boating, racing, and hunting days, and one trophy from a far-north deer forest that won Miss Fullarton's regard, and restored the young man to the old place in her esteem; black-letter books and pottery of eccentric device, not to speak of pipes and whips, and weapons of slaughter enough to furnish forth an armoury.

"And do you carry all this about with you?" Bell asked.

"Oh no. I only come here from time to time. I knock about the world a good deal, you see, and this is all I can boast of in the way of a home."

"One can see that you have seen the world," said madame graciously; "this apartment is bewitching."

"It is dull enough often, I assure you."

He spoke so earnestly that Lady Malleson's gentle heart was touched for him. Would he like a visit now and then from the twins? she wondered. She was considering whether she could make this sacrifice to his cheerfulness, when he again addressed Bell.

"I want your opinion of the piano, Miss Fullarton, if you will kindly give it. It's a new one, and I'm not sure of the tone. Won't you please try it for me?"

He led her across the room, and Bell seated herself and struck some chords critically. She gave her verdict conscientiously, and then instinctively her fingers wandered into a plaintive minor air, and she began to sing absently :

“ Oh, why left I my hame ?
Why did I cross the deep ?
Oh, why left I my hame where my forefathers sleep ?
I sigh for Scotia's shore,
And I gaze across the sea,
But I cannot get a blink o' my ain countree.”

Felix lingered dutifully till the first lines were sung, and then he left her side and went to Di, who stood at the moment alone, a little apart from the other ladies who had withdrawn to one of the windows.

She had been very quiet ; she alone asked no questions. She was living in those days in a sort of dream from which she knew that sooner or later she must awake. There had been no pain, hardly any awkwardness in this renewed friendship. Why should they not be friends, best and faithfulest of friends ? Felix had been very gentle with her and had forgiven her any disappointment she might have caused him. He had got over it beautifully. She professed herself glad that he had forgiven and forgotten, and did her best to stifle the impertinent doubts that would assert themselves,

and to believe this preposterous fiction rather than give her fluttering hopes their due.

Felix had hardly spoken to her all day. It was very rude of him to talk when Miss Bell was entertaining the company; but the matrons who stood by the window had set a bad example, and the singer would never reproach them; she was, indeed, far away from them all in her "ain countree."

"You know that song?" he asked, coming close to her, and speaking low not to disturb the music.

"No," she said. "Is it Scotch?"

"Yes, it always makes me feel wretched—an outcast, a tramp—a wandering Dutchman, if you like."

"Why?" she questioned, opening her eyes; "it is pretty."

"It's a positive insult to sing it in my hearing; what have I to do with songs about home? I might long for a lifetime, but where is my home, here or across the sea?"

"You have a very pretty one here," said Di, not uninclined to smile at this tirade.

"This!" It is impossible to convey the disdain of the tone. "Do you call this a home? I've a roof to cover me, no doubt; but then, any fellow with twopence in his pocket can command that—as for anything else——"

He poured contempt on his surroundings. Nothing could be more pitiable than his circumstances. Where was any lot so hard as his? "I see other men positively gloating on their happiness. They talk to you of an English fireside — what do I know of an English fireside? I live on the outskirts of life; I look at happiness through other men's eyes. There's nobody in London more lonely than I am."

"You could go somewhere else," she suggested, this time laughing outright. "If the sight of your friends in London makes you so unhappy, why don't you go somewhere else?"

Felix, with a sudden change from tragic woe to the utmost eagerness, answered promptly.

"I've been thinking of that. You don't care very much for London, do you?"

"Not very much," said Di, failing to see what this had to do with the question.

"A man ought to settle and have a bit of earth to call his own. It seems to me the best sort of career, the best way to acquire an interest in your country and your countrymen. That sort of thing is impossible here. A bachelor in London is the most selfish being in existence. You believe in all that, don't you? I wanted to consult you about it." Was there ever a youth so eager for miscellaneous advice?

and to believe this preposterous fiction rather than give her fluttering hopes their due.

Felix had hardly spoken to her all day. It was very rude of him to talk when Miss Bell was entertaining the company; but the matrons who stood by the window had set a bad example, and the singer would never reproach them; she was, indeed, far away from them all in her "ain countree."

"You know that song?" he asked, coming close to her, and speaking low not to disturb the music.

"No," she said. "Is it Scotch?"

"Yes, it always makes me feel wretched—an outcast, a tramp—a wandering Dutchman, if you like."

"Why?" she questioned, opening her eyes; "it is pretty."

"It's a positive insult to sing it in my hearing; what have I to do with songs about home? I might long for a lifetime, but where is my home, here or across the sea?"

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"I think it would be good for you to have some work to do."

"You think I have been shamefully idle?"

"Not shamefully," she smiled, "but just a little, perhaps."

"Property nowadays brings plenty of responsibilities, if one cares to take them on one's shoulders."

"You would like to buy land in England?"

"A man I know told me yesterday of a place that is for sale in Essex. Just the sort of thing I've been looking out for, for a year or two—by fits and starts," he acknowledged with a smile. "But I suppose, as old Ralph is always saying, one must cease to rove about the world some day."

"Then the song would come true for you, too."

He looked as if he were about to say something impetuous, but he checked himself in time. "I live in hope that it will come true—the home to go to, not to leave. About this place;—there is an old house, and it has a bit of a history. It is nothing very grand or pretentious, but it was once upon a time a favourite hunting-lodge of Henry VIII., and there is a room still called after Anne Boleyn, where she is said to have slept. There is an inscription to Queen Elizabeth too, over the

entrance, in which they call her a "shining star of piety" and other flattering things, so, you see, it has a fine flavour of royalty about it."

"I like an old house, a house with a story," said Di, conscientiously trying, but with very poor success, to picture Philippa flitting about in the stately rooms, where the beautiful and unfortunate young Anne once queened it.

"Do you know those green Essex lanes? There is nothing like them in their own way for beauty."

She shook her head.

"I have never been there."

"Ah! I forgot this was your first visit to England. You must go. You should see the hedgerows there in June."

"Mamma was born there, but I don't know where; and an old friend of hers who could have told me died the other day." A little shade of sadness crossed her face.

"May I find out?" he asked gently; "it wouldn't be difficult, and then perhaps you would like to go yourself some day and see the place."

"I should like to see it, if you could find out."

"I will. I am going to take a run to Essex to-morrow, at any rate, to have a look at this place, and see if it is all it is said to be. And, if it should turn out a success, I was thinking, if

Lady Malleson and Miss Bell would consent, you would perhaps all take pity on me and give me your verdict. It's a very serious affair choosing a house, and there will be all sorts of alterations to make; and a man, you know, is perfectly helpless in such matters."

"I don't know. Bell must decide," she said hurriedly, rising as she spoke. She began to be afraid of these proposals for new days to be spent together. Either she was less strong than she supposed or her doubts more urgent.

After all, Felix had not said the words he meant to say. This was neither the place nor the hour to renew his pleading. Besides, as his love grew stronger there was in it more of timidity; he felt less sure of his worthiness, less hopeful.

At the best, while Bell's fingers were touching the last chords, he could but put in a plea for further grace.

"I have never given you Ralph's message," he said. "When I come back may I tell you about it? It is something that concerns me very nearly. You will listen to it, won't you?"

Surely her fancy must have passed away and touched the rim of the truth, for she paused, and the slow colour rose and ebbed again in her face before she spoke.

For a moment he hung as anxiously on her

answer as if he had given her the message and waited her decision.

She looked up and said with a smile—

“I always listen to what Ralph says. Yes, tell me when you come back.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“ . . . Give us leave, I pray, awhile ;
We have some secrets to confer about . . . ”

READERS of fiction are well aware that it is part of the novelist's mission to create clouds, misunderstandings, rifts within the lute ; shadows, in short, of one kind or another, in which the hero and heroine are to wander apart and disconsolate, until the sun bursts forth and shines on them in the last chapter.

While Di was being made much of, and *fêted* after the manner of a princess, fate was as remorselessly weaving a net for her feet as if she were an important heroine of romance. It was a long time, indeed, before she heard the message it had cost Ralph so dear to send, and on which Felix built so many hopes.

While she was heedlessly dreaming away the last of many pleasant hours, it is not to be supposed that Philippa and her mother were enjoying themselves. The dismal house at

Brompton had something to do with it, and the damaged furniture and broken tea-cups. The temper suffers from these things, and when you add to such small annoyances the mortifying knowledge that your friends have forgotten you, or, at least, got on very well without you, you have good ground to think ill of the world.

Mrs. Henshaw was, of course, well aware of Felix Chester's presence in London, and of the way in which he spent his days, and at this time she took an exceedingly morbid view of life. She used to hint darkly that faithfulness and constancy were virtues that no longer existed, and that it was her child's fate to be as miserable as she herself had been.

"Miserable!" said Philippa, whose distaste took another form; "I think some cheaper word might do. We have had our share of good things as well as others. I don't mean to sulk all day because the Baird Browns haven't asked me to their ball."

"That introduction to the De Lacys has spoilt them. I always thought Mrs. Baird Brown very frivolous."

"I'm not good enough for them now. It seems to me there are a good many people for whom I'm not good enough!"

Mrs. Henshaw looked at her oddly.

"I think I'll call on Miss Ouvry," she said.

"She has come here once or twice, and it would be only polite to return her visit. I might take her a little drive, the day you go to the dress-maker's. It will be something to do. I am sure she would like a little drive in the park. I dare say Mrs. Smith would lend me her carriage for the afternoon."

"Oh yes. Mrs. Smith has not dropped us. The yellow chariot is very imposing, and there would be room for all the ladies. I dare say you could find a corner for Mr. Chester, too, since I am not to be of the party."

"What sort of a person is this Miss Fullarton?"

"She is not a 'person' at all; she's a very discriminating young lady. I think Mr. Malleson would like her."

"What makes you think of him?" Mrs. Henshaw asked with a touch of sharpness.

"Oh, I don't know." Philippa opened her blue eyes. "I think of him very often. He is a sort of conscience to me. I can't afford to keep a conscience for myself."

"He is very rough and ill-mannered, I think; and after the trouble I took to please him!"

"That is just it," said Philippa, smiling to herself. "One's conscience is always dreadfully uncivil and plain-spoken."

"Well, go and put on your hat, and you can

post my note to Miss Ouvry on your way to the Smiths. But don't stay long, Philippa. I desire you to be polite; but the Smiths are not people I wish you to be very intimate with."

"I'll be very judicious," said the young lady gravely. "I'll hint to them gently that I am glad to know them till the De Lacys call on us. After that, it will be my painful duty to drop them."

"How often must I beg you not to talk like that, child! It is such bad taste. Here are the letters."

"Have you been writing to Mrs. St. John? Do you want an introduction to the American colony here, mamma?"

"I've been recommending Madame Duval to her." She arranged the scented sheets of paper with precise care in her desk as she spoke. "She is an excellent person, and such a good cook; and she would take any one on my recommendation, though she is so particular."

"I should not have thought Mrs. St. John needed advice about Paris."

"You heard her say she was going there immediately, and I am always glad to assist a friend if I can."

"I didn't know you were so fond of her."

Philippa looked for a moment at her mother, as if she would have asked her a question, but Mrs. Henshaw had already began another letter.

"Go away, child," she cried; "you fidget me so, standing there."

And Philippa went, her question unasked.

It took but a moment to post the notes, but the Smiths could not be treated so cavalierly. They were kindly people, and Philippa thought that they had been specially created to restore her self-respect. The world has a very engaging air so long as you ride through it at your ease, with lovers and friends bending low on every side of you; but when you have to walk in the dust, and are jostled by the crowd, you are glad enough of the homage of a Smith, and do not insist too rigorously on having the full complement of h's in the soothing things he says to you.

Philippa was made much of by this good-tempered household. The family chariot and any number of horses she might please to command were at her service. The Smith young ladies were very amiable. They admired Miss Henshaw's beauty and her graceful ways. They would have liked to offer her some of their superfluous finery, if that had been at all a possible thing to do. They longed to have a

brother, that he might immediately fall in love with this new and charming friend.

All this was very pleasant—pleasanter than the shabby Brompton drawing-room and her mamma's plaintive monologue. Philippa lingered, and was late in returning to her home. She knew in a moment, when she entered the dull, sunless room that something had happened. Disaster was in the very air. Her mother was idle—the letter unfinished. There were new signs of dejection in her attitude, she was huddled in one corner of the sofa, she looked shaken and cowed.

Philippa's mind went back in a flash to certain winter days in Madrid.

"Mamma," she said, pausing on the threshold, "what is it? Has any one been asking you for money?" Creditors clamorous for their due—this was the form of trouble with which she was most familiar.

"He was paid. When I made that sacrifice I did not think I should be called on to suffer any further humiliation. You have been cruel to me—an unnatural child!" Mrs. Henshaw's voice came muffled and faint from among the cushions.

"What is it, mamma?" She shut the door, and went forward, speaking gently. "I don't understand. Who has been troubling you?"

She stood with her hands clasped before her mother. "Tell me about it."

"It is you who should have told me; you said it was all at an end between you. What have I done that I should have such an ungrateful daughter!" She lifted her head and made a vague appeal to the furniture.

"Do you mean Mr. Ferryman?"

"He has been here." The mother spoke with growing agitation. "He has been saying dreadful things to me; he says it wasn't the money."

"He was glad enough to take the money," said Philippa, with a curling lip.

"He says you gave him a solemn promise that you would marry him in a year, when he gave you back the letters; and when I told him that could not be, he said he would make you tell me himself in his presence."

"Make me!"

"He says he will never give you up."

"If I give him up it will come to the same thing, I suppose?"

"You have behaved very badly," said Mrs. Henshaw, relapsing into querulous complaint. "You never think how all the suffering falls on me. How can I help you if you deceive me so? And you told me it was all at an end!"

"Oh, how can I remember what I said!" Philippa exclaimed pettishly. "I dare say I made the most preposterous promises. I wanted to get rid of him. I would have agreed to travel to the moon with him in a year, just to purchase five minutes' freedom. If he believed me, he is not what I take him to be."

"It is exceedingly wrong, it is wicked to make promises that you don't mean to keep. I thought I had taught you better."

Philippa said nothing. Her mother's little moral maxims always reduced her to silence. Presently, touched by I know not what sorrowful feeling of comradeship—of fellowship in shabby deeds and low aims—she went and stood behind her mother's sofa.

"Poor little mamma, what a plague I am to you!" she said.

"He will come again. He makes my life wretched. I had such brilliant hopes for you; I am afraid of him."

"I am not." She lifted her head proudly. "If he comes again I will see him myself."

"No, no; you will not. I forbid it." She was clutched by the sleeve. "Do you hear me, Philippa, I forbid you to see him!"

"Very well, mamma," said the girl calmly; "just as you like. We can run away instead."

"He would follow us."

"He can't follow us everywhere; the cotton and the beer would suffer. Yes, we may as well go. England has not been so kind to us that we need regret leaving it; and discretion is perhaps the better part, since I have no champion now to adopt my cause!"

"My poor child!" Mrs. Henshaw made a futile effort to take her daughter's hand. "Oh, what it is to suffer from the treachery of a friend!" she said, with a quick change to sentiment. "It is just my story—just my own sad story repeating itself. I suffer for you and with you, my Philippa!"

"But, indeed, I am not suffering!" cried Philippa gaily. "I am luxuriating in the thought of Paris. Madame Duval must take us instead of Mrs. St. John. How charmed the dear old woman will be to see us! You had better write to Di, and put off the drive in the yellow chariot. I'll seek out M. Adolphe, the pigeon-breasted, and send him over to England. Oh, how much he will like it!" she cried, in a mocking voice.

"How you talk!" said her mother; but she listened, a little consoled. For her, too, Paris seemed a city of refuge after England, which had not been gracious to her. She was glad to go, but she decided in her own mind that there was no such haste, no such pressure that

the matter of the drive need be put off. She had already given strict orders that Mr. Ferryman was not again to be admitted, and even he would hardly insist on forcing his way to her presence.

She went alone to Kensington the next day. Di was ready dressed and waiting for her; she was almost eager to go. Some unspoken compunction filled her heart, when she thought that she had drifted a little apart from Philippa, who had been her dearest friend. She forgot the many times she had suffered in the older lady's company, and only remembered that she was Philippa's mother and her father's old friend.

There was no talk of Bell's or of madame's sharing the drive, and, indeed, they had not been invited. Madame was guilty of peeping behind the drawn blind at the handsome lady with the nodding plumes, who lounged among the cushions as if to the manner born. Then Di stepped in beside her, the footman banged the door, and they set off.

Madame looked with envious admiration at the spectacle; but Di's heart sunk when she found herself alone with her hostess.

"Philippa had an engagement; and, besides, I wanted you all to myself," she said. "I wanted to have a little talk with you."

She gave the order to drive to the country.

"It will be quieter," she explained, as they went towards Hammersmith.

At first they spoke of indifferent matters ; but this light skimming over the surface of things was but the prelude to graver business.

"I wanted to speak to you about Philippa," said Mrs. Henshaw presently.

"Yes?" said Di, wondering, and a trifle anxious. "She is well?"

"She is well in health, poor child. She has a wonderful spirit."

"I have seen so little of her ; but when Bell asked her she would not come."

"How could you expect it?" Mrs. Henshaw spoke with the gentlest reproach. "Do you think my child is made of stone ; do you think she is marble—dead, without feelings ; that she can look calmly on while another enjoys all that was once hers?"

Di's heart beat with a sudden alarmed throbbing ; but she would not stoop to say she did not understand.

"No one wished to be unkind to her," she said faintly.

"Perhaps not ; perhaps not." Mrs. Henshaw shook her head gently. "But what inconstancy ! what treachery !"

"There was no treachery," said Di, sitting

up. She felt that this was unjust, and her sense of righteousness gave her strength to speak her mind. She, at least, had been true to Philippa. "I think you ought to know everything before you say that," she said bravely.

"I see my child suffering; isn't that enough for me? I see that the most solemn claims have been disregarded, the most binding promises broken, and you tell me there is nothing treacherous in that! Is it nothing that her love should be wasted, her life blighted?"

The lady had worked herself up into a very pretty indignation, though it was expressed with soft melancholy. She honestly believed that she and her daughter had a claim on the wayward young man who was in both minds, though his name had not been spoken by either. How else could she have taken money from him? Was it not because he was so much to her already, and one day to be her son that she had done it? But when she talked of wasted love and a blighted life, Di interrupted her. The words jarred on her; they rang false. She had a troubled doubt that it was not Philippa who would suffer, whose life would be desolate.

"Suppose he found out that he did not care for her enough—in that way," she said, though her voice was unsteady. "Are you not—will you not think a little of him? He has a right

to choose; he has his own life to think of." Her cheeks were glowing and she hung her head. If she was faithless to Philippa it was because she was faithful to something better. "You can't choose for another; you can't pass on love at will," she faltered.

"Ah! you think so now. You told me something very different once. It was you who gave me hope."

"Yes," said Di; "I believed it then. I believed it till to-day, I think; but I was wrong."

"He has made you believe that?"

"He never spoke of it. How could you think that of him!"

"You have been a false friend to my poor girl," cried the mother. "You, in whom she believed."

"No," said Di, looking bravely at her companion. "It may not seem so, but I have been true to her. I want her to be happy; but if he does not love her?"

"You mean that he loves you."

"I did not say it!" cried poor Di, shocked, ashamed, distressed. "Oh, you cannot think that I was pleading for myself!"

"Ah! but it is true. You cannot deny it. Before he saw you she was everything to him—everything; and now she is despised, slighted,

forgotten. And yet you wonder that she does not come to see you!"

"You don't understand," said Di, with rising agitation. "It is not as you suppose. I have not taken him from her."

"But you cannot deny that you love him."

She spoke calmly and with firmness. It was no moment to be angry. She had other shafts in reserve; she knew that in the end she must conquer. No thought of the pain and shame she was inflicting crossed her purpose. She was full of courage, for was she not fighting for her child?

The girl at her side found no words to answer this charge. Her lips refused to speak, but her heart cried out in sudden confirmation. It was true that she loved him. If she never knew it before, at least she knew it now. They were crossing Kew Bridge. The placid river stealing along in the sunshine reflected here and there a patch of sky; the quaint houses on the bank were half asleep, and in the slumberous stillness of the drowsy afternoon she heard but the one sound. It was an inarticulate voice, but the air seemed clamorous with it. "You love him!" A thousand echoes seemed to catch it up, and to repeat it endlessly—"You love him!"

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“ Listen,” said Mrs. Henshaw, settling herself among the cushions, and lowering the sunshade

she carried. "I will tell you a story, my own story. When I was young, a girl like Philippa, and as pretty as she is now, they tell me, there was some one I loved." She paused, giving a moment's bitter and vainly regretful thought to that one true emotion of her life. "He cared for me; we were boy and girl together. He would have loved me in time," she went on hotly, almost vehemently; "and I should have made him happy, but another girl stepped in, and took him from me. That girl was your mother."

If she had wished to distract her companion's thoughts she had succeeded.

"Mamma!" said Di. "Oh, she can never have known that you cared for him." Then she was suddenly struck by the resemblance of the two experiences, and a multitude of hints and insinuations, hitherto not understood, rushed in upon her mind.

"She knew it; and you are doing what she did."

"I am sorry, very sorry if we have hurt you, mamma and I," Di faltered; "but as for papa, if it was mamma he loved—don't you see—?"

"Your father! I am not talking of your father," Mrs. Henshaw interrupted quickly. She was about to deal her last stroke, and even now while victory was in sight, she felt a momentary

pang of compunction. It was cruel, perhaps, and it was exceeding unpleasant, but she had her own child to think of. Then she remembered Ralph Malleson's last words: if he had not spared her, why should she spare this girl? He had ferreted out her secret; he had proclaimed it aloud, laughed and jested about it, no doubt; and was she to be more generous than he? She grew hard as she recalled his look and his words.

"The wrong did not end there," she said. "Your mother took him from me, but he did not marry her. That was her punishment. And if you succeed better, if you marry Felix Chester, you will be punished too. You will be sorry for it all your life."

"You have no right to say such things to me," cried Di, stung at last into indignant anger; "and I don't believe it—it is all false."

"But you must believe it; it is true. You will repent of it when it is too late; you will think of my words then. You will bring your husband a stained name, do you hear me? Would you like him to pity you, perhaps to despise you? You make me say hard things, but how can I help it? Your father is a disgraced man. He took money that was not his own—money that was my father's, and should have been mine. Do you understand now, how

much we have suffered at your hands ; how much I have forgiven ? ”

During all the time in which these hot words were poured out on her, Di had sat in amazed and perplexed silence, her eyes fixed on the speaker's face ; now she moved her head with a little gesture of pride and disdain, and her clasped hands relaxed their hold of each other.

“The padre !” she said ; and there was supreme amusement in her tone, and in the smile with which she greeted this preposterous story. “You expect me to believe a wicked story like that—the padre steal money that belonged to you !”

“Ah, you may laugh now,” said Mrs. Henshaw, bitterly mortified at this reception of the truth. She had expected the girl to be cowed, overwhelmed, bowed down with shame, and she sat erect with flashing eyes, and a proud disdain on her lips. “Ask others, who will tell you the same tale ; you will not laugh then. Ask your friend Mr. Malleeson ; ask your father himself, he will hardly deny it ; ask Mrs. Gordon, Mrs. St. John, any one you choose, since you refuse to believe my poor words.”

“Ask them ? That would be to doubt him and to believe you. Do you think, because you are disappointed—because you think we have hurt you, though we have not—that I shall look

on my father as a thief, and my mother—oh, I will not speak of her to you! She was good, and you—you are cruel and wicked. I will get out here, if you please,” she said, rising and stopping the coachman with an imperious little sign.

Her voice frightened the older lady into bewildered acquiescence. She was so hot, so fierce in her young indignation.

“I don’t think I can ever speak to you again. You couldn’t expect it, after the things you have said; but I’ll always love Philippa,” she added, with a break in her clear ringing voice.

Then she waved to the man to go on, and she was left alone in the straggling outskirts of Hammersmith. There were some small gutter children, who set up a shrill shout, and raced a little way after the stately yellow chariot, stirring the dust with their bare feet. Deonys laughed with them. She felt a strange inclination to mirth; she walked with a defiant head, and looked about her proudly. She felt strong enough to walk for a hundred miles, and the bit of bare road that divided her from her home looked all too short.

The blood was leaping and tingling in her veins; her feet felt winged. She never knew how hot the sun was, how still and oppressive the air. In this mood and mind she went home;

she pulled the bell with a steady hand, and marched upstairs with the bearing of a queen. She went straight to her own room, and took off her outer dress in haste, yet with orderly touches, folding and putting it away. Then at last she paused, while a sudden wild suspicion crossed her mind, that there would come a moment when she should have to think; till now there had been something to do.

She went and stood by the window, looking vaguely out. While she was still held in the clutch of that dread—the dread that she must by-and-by think and remember—the door opened, and her cousin came in.

“Look here, Di,” she cried, and her voice expressed rare pleasure. “See what came when you were out. Flowers! country ones, wild ones; peep in here.”

Then, surprised at the other's silence, she glanced up.

“What is it!” she cried in alarm. “Are you ill?”

Di lifted her hands as if to steady her lips, which were trembling; then, in a sudden need of comfort, of refuge from her alarm, she put her arms round her cousin's neck. “Oh, Bell, I am so miserable!” she sobbed.

CHAPTER IX.

“Now let it work. Mischief, thou art afoot,
Take thou what course thou wilt.”

“Bring me no more reports: let them all fly.”

MADRID is not a pleasant place in July. No shutters are close enough to exclude the pitiless sun; one suffers alternately from fevered heat and a deadly languor hardly more endurable; the day is a long purgatory, from which there is no deliverance till darkness conquers the light.

Malleson would not follow the universal example of flight. He took a dogged pleasure in staying on in the arid city, in being now burnt up and now chilled, while his friends took refuge in the mountains or by the sea. He said, in answer to every remonstrance, that he had work to do. He clung to this pretence of being too busy to spare a moment, even to thrust some shirts and a book or two into his

portmanteau. When he wrote to Di, his notes were scribbled with old Anchel grumbling at his ear, and announcing the closing hour to be perilously near. The one thing that he declared to be perfectly impossible, was his promised journey to England.

"I must break my promise for once," he wrote. "I can't get away. See what it is to be a toiler!"

Di read these letters with a sigh, and yet with a certain pride in Ralph's importance. She believed in all good faith that journalism would collapse without his strong support; that the great daily for which he toiled would become so much waste paper, should he desert it. He made a brave effort to have an equal faith in the value of his labours; to assure himself that England was waiting for his words of wisdom. The *cacoëthès scribendi* had seized him, and he worked unremittingly, but it would not always do. There were times when his pen dropped from his fingers, when he was forced to think, when forgetfulness would not come at will—when he was conscious of a fierce, almost an overmastering longing for one glimpse of a sweet face far away.

At these times he could hardly restrain himself from rushing out and buying a ticket for London—then he remembered Felix, and sat

down again, pulling his papers towards him and dipping his pen grimly in the ink. Was he to travel all these miles only to listen to the boy's outpourings, to share his hopes and fears—perhaps to witness his success? The thought was not to be endured. The letters that were brought to him made epochs in his barren life. Di wrote regularly; honest little epistles, in which she told him everything very frankly—what she had seen, what she had done. Bell's opinions and maxims were largely quoted, sometimes in all reverence and faith, now and again with a spice of fun. He thought when he came to such passages that he could hear her merry laugh; and he looked up startled, to be met by the dull, blank indifference of his shabby furniture.

By-and-by Felix's name began to appear in these chronicles. It came in sparingly, and yet the written sheets seemed to be full of him. The phrases were artless and candid as ever; but to his jealous scrutiny there was a new tenderness, a new reticence in the very wording of the most commonplace item of news concerning him.


All this time he was waiting for her confession. He knew that if there were any to make it would be made to him, and that Felix would flood him with extravagant outpourings

of joy. He awaited this ordeal grimly; he told himself he was ready to face it. After it he promised himself a holiday, and a long one; he might even bring himself to go to England by-and-by, and congratulate these young people, who would count on his sympathy. But first they must claim it, and as yet no bold and triumphant announcement had come in Felix's scrawling, school-boy hand.

In the midst of all this absorbing toil he had preserved the one good habit of going out nightly for his supper. He had had thoughts, indeed, of renouncing this meal, or of making Anchel fetch it for him, but the latter plan had drawbacks. He could be deaf to the old serving man's muttered remonstrances, but he could not quicken his hobbling gait, or eat the tepid messes that at last reached him; and, after a little trial of abstinence, he gave in, like a wise man, and listened to the appeal of his appetite.

It was on one of his journeys to the café he frequented that he met Mrs. St. John, a late lingerer in the summer city. The American lady had no strong hold on his likings, and he was about to sneak past her, but she was determined not to be ignored.

She sailed down on him, barring his path; her maid lingered discreetly behind.



"Hot, isn't it?" he remarked, with great originality, hoping to be let off with a bow and a smile, but a hand was put out to detain him.

"Were you going to pass me?" she exclaimed. "Now, I call that real mean of you; and Madrid as deserted as a grave-yard. Why haven't you been to see me?"

"I've been busy," he answered, wondering how soon it would be possible to make his escape.

"Oh, don't tell me!" She tossed her pretty head. "That's what Mr. St. John says. I believe it's all an excuse. I guess you found time to go and see Mrs. Gordon."

"I've been nowhere, I assure you."

"Well, I'm not going to wait for Mr. St. John any longer. I declare I've wasted the whole summer waiting for him. I'm going off to-morrow. The major's going to take care of me. I guess it will be cooler in Paris, anyway."

Malleson murmured something to the effect that the major was greatly honoured.

"He's better than nobody," said the frank little lady. "Anyway, he's a man; but I'm about worn out looking after him. I've been round to his place to see that he's packed up."

"Ah, he is fortunate," said Malleson, supposing some reply was expected of him.

"He's such an old gossip; he's more like

a woman. He's so taken up with this story, you can't think; I dare say he's gone to your place to talk it over with you."

"Very likely," said Ralph, mentally resolving to extend his walk. He had no clue to the story hinted at, nor had he any desire to possess one. The words, indeed, hardly entered his brain at all.

"Well, you do take it coolly!"

"Do I?" he said, smiling vacantly. "I thought I did my share of grumbling at the heat."

"I don't believe you're listening. I think you might have told me!" cried his companion, suddenly remembering to feel aggrieved. "I've been so dull, too!"


She stood there before him in her elegant summer flounces, effectually barring his path, and now she was pouting and shooting at him glances of lively reproach.

He wondered what it was all about.

"You knew I was dying for some news. It's a real queer story."

"No doubt," said Malleson desperately, floundering deeper and deeper into difficulties.

"Well, *you* ought to know. It was real sly of her to come here and make such friends with us all, and to keep so quiet. I guess she was no better than the rest of us, though she was



so strict with that girl of hers. Mr. St. John says he knew it all along, but that's nonsense. It's just that he likes to think he knows more than others. I've noticed that in men; they like to be masters in everything."

"We strive to keep up a poor semblance of authority," said Malleson, with a dismal attempt at liveliness. "So you are going off to-morrow? Then I must wish you——"

"I declare," she said pensively, interrupting his farewell, "I don't know what Laura will say to me for letting that man come to our ball. She's so strict; she's got such notions; she's what I call a perfect Puritan."

"You are going to Paris, you know, so she won't be able to scold you," he answered at random. "Good-bye, and much happiness."

He was congratulating himself on his escape when he heard little pattering steps behind him, and a shrill clear voice calling him by his name.

"Mr. Malleson," said the lady, breathless and hot, "I declare I'm half dead with running. I wanted to say to you that I'm downright sorry for that poor little girl—your friend, you know. It wasn't her fault, I guess; and I do think it was mean to write about her as she did. She's done nothing to make folks despise her. You tell her that I'll stick by her whatever they

may say. I can make the men behave well to her, anyway. They've all got to obey me"—she threw up her head, and looked at him with a laugh—"and when you have the men on your side you're all right, you know."

This time it was the lady who fled, and the gentleman who stood rooted to the spot staring blankly after her.

What did this vulgar, horrible little person mean? All his insular prejudices rose up in arms against her foolishness—her too great frankness; and when a dim suspicion entered his mind that it was Di whom she meant to patronize and defend, the blood pulsed in angry leaps through his veins, and mounted in dull red to his brow. It was well for her that she had fled. His little Di, in need of her protection, her pleading! He laughed at the very thought. His amazement and indignation so filled his mind, that he forgot altogether the scraps of intelligence that had reached him through Mrs. St. John's talk; he only knew that in some unkind fashion rumour had been busy with Di's name, and that was enough for him.

He entered the café, and almost mechanically gave his order, thinking with even a touch of amusement of the audacity of the lady's speech. He had no sooner taken his seat at one of the

little marble-topped tables, than a man crossed to him from the other side of the room, bringing his wine-glass and newspaper with him.

Malleson had hardly more than a nodding acquaintance with this new-comer, but in the dearth and emptiness of the city the few lingerers were glad to draw together; and Mr. Ponsonby paid himself the poor compliment of dreading to be alone.

"Queer story this, of Ouvry," he remarked, after they had discussed the weather and matters political.

"I've heard nothing," said Malleson curtly. So then it was Di's father they were talking of? His brow darkened; he looked very forbidding.

"No? You've been shutting yourself up, eh? These things get about so soon. I thought you must have heard."

"I have been busy," said Malleson shortly. "Nobody was obliging enough to come and tell me. You are my first informant."

"Well," said Mr. Ponsonby, pulling his grey whiskers, not ill pleased at this distinction, "I always thought he was rather shady myself. I've put it to Mrs. Ponsonby more than once like this: "Here is Ouvry, by his own showing, the longest here of any of us, if you except the major. It's a goodish bit of a man's life that,

and yet you never hear of his running over to England. It's odd that a man shouldn't care to pay a visit now and again to his own country. It makes you think, you know, that it's because he daren't. That's what I've said to my wife more than once."

"You've been here yourself a good while," said Malleson rather brutally.

"I go to England every year or two. I presume you don't mean to hint that *I* require to keep on this side of the Channel," said the little man showing some natural irritation.

"Certainly not," said Malleson coldly.

"We are going again—in a fortnight," fumed the other. "We are going to visit Mrs. Ponsonby's relations in Dorsetshire; and I must say it's—ah, well, it's unpleasant——"

"I intended no offence," said Ralph, rising and pushing back his chair—he left his supper untasted; "but at the same time can't you suppose that a man may have some other motive rather than the worst for not desiring to revisit his own country? She has been a hard enough stepmother to some of us," he added bitterly.

He turned away as he spoke and, nodding a good-night, left the café.

Mr. Ponsonby stared after him wrathfully. He had been snubbed, and balked at the same time of a good story; and it was not in human

nature to pardon the slight. He used, henceforward, to shake his head and hint darkly that Malleson's views were peculiar. You could not stir him from his indifference by the worst news; there was something quite immoral about his laxity. That was what came of living in a foreign land without the saving influence of a periodical visit to England.

Ralph had heard too much for his peace. That people's tongues should be set a-wagging about Di's father was enough. He did not care to learn the particulars of the long-hidden deed that had been disinterred, and was now being discussed with so much candour by his friends. He was thinking chiefly of the little girl in England, with a thankful heart that she was so far away—so far beyond reach of the pain he was suffering on her account.

This was, then, the news Mrs. St. John was so anxious to share with him. "Trust a woman to take care of your reputation," he said to himself, with half whimsical scorn. "She will sacrifice it for the sake of five minutes' amusement." There was, indeed, something pagan in her frank seizure of this relief to her dullness; it might be his turn next to enliven the lady's idle hours. Ponsonby was little better than an old woman in his love of gossip; he would unhesitatingly offer up his dearest friend for the

chance of a story that told well. In the dearth and dullness of the city a hint of a mystery was as good as a windfall. No doubt this fine breath of scandal had already penetrated to every corner of the Barrio Salamanca, where the English colony had established itself. It would not be the fault of these babblers if it failed to follow those who had gone to the mountains and the sea.

It did not strike him yet to wonder how this rumour had arisen, how it had been raised out of the grave where it had slept so long and so peacefully; it was there facing him, that was enough. Nor did he disbelieve it; he knew it was true.

He went out and walked aimlessly towards the Puerta del Sol, remembering to avoid his own street, where the major was no doubt lying in wait for him with another version of the story. After the hermit-like life he had been living so long, it was strange to him to mingle again with the crowd which thronged the streets now that the hottest hours were over. He seemed to have been suddenly thrust into a new world; he had not had time to collect or arrange his thoughts, which passed aimlessly from Di's father to Di herself safe in England. He remembered his talk with Mrs. Gordon. Here, then, was the clue which he had declared he would have followed ruthlessly to the end. Now

that it was in his hands he felt no desire to know more. He was neither contemptuous, nor angry, nor pitiful. It appeared to him as if he had known from the very first that there was an underside to his friend's pleasantness, and the revelation did not come on him with any sharp surprise; it hardly as yet touched him. He was chiefly bent on remembering with pleasure how far off England was; what a wide sea rolled between; and how slow even the ugliest gossip would be in reaching that distant shore.

While busy thus with his ponderings, he had unconsciously turned into the Calle Preciados. This street was quieter than those he had left, for most of the holiday-makers had already reached the Prado, to which the music was calling them. He had not proceeded many steps when he saw the man he most wished to avoid advancing to meet him. There was pride in the major's bearing, and a great disdain in the carriage of his head. Ralph looked about him for a means of escape from this irate military man; the one thing he could not do was to stand and listen. He was about to dive into an open doorway when he felt a touch upon his shoulder.

"I was coming to you," said Mr. Ouvry, in his softest tone; he passed his hand through

Malleson's arm. "Were you going to my rooms? Ah, there is the major," he said, before Ralph could reply. He withdrew his hand, and held it out to the new-comer. "A hot night," he said pleasantly. "I hear you are going off to-morrow."

Major Gibbs paused in front of them. It was a great moment for him. His cheeks were a dull red; his eyes glared under his bushy brows. He ignored the outstretched hand; his voice was wrathful, but he spoke with dignity.

"Sir," he said, "I'll thank you not to address me again till you have cleared yourself of the scandalous rumours that have arisen about you. I am a gentlemen, sir, and used to the company of gentlemen. I decline, sir, to have anything to do with you till you have cleared yourself. I'm not a Puritan, God knows, but I'm a man of honour, and there are some things I can't stomach."

Malleson forebore in pity to glance at his companion, while the major spoke; but he was startled next moment to hear Mr. Ouvry's voice, clear and soft as ever, perhaps even slightly amused.

"Come, major," he said, "this is hardly a way to treat an old friend and school-fellow. You take for granted I am guilty, and you don't even tell me of what offence I am accused."

"Don't call yourself a friend of mine, sir!" interrupted the angry soldier, garnishing his talk with expressions that need not be recorded. "Clear yourself, first!"

"Come, come, major," said Mr. Ouvry, still bland and good-humoured, but with a spark of fire in his cold eye. "Be a little more guarded."

But the wrathful major would not listen. He was purple with anger, his dignity had vanished. "Don't address me, sir," he cried. "Stick to your own friends"—he glanced scornfully at Malleson—"they are not so particular, it would seem."

He walked down the street, the embodiment of outraged, indignant virtue. Mr. Ouvry looked after him with a thin smile curling his well-cut lips. Then he turned to Ralph with a shrug.

"He was always hasty. What was it they used to call him at school? Flarebob Gibbs! A good name, eh? Come up to my rooms; I wanted to have a talk with you. I'm going off to-morrow, too. The heat has conquered even me this year."

He spoke so easily that Malleson was rendered dumb out of sheer surprise, and followed him without a protest. He had not failed to notice the major's sneers. He was taken for the friend of this man, about whom evil things were spoken;

he had identified himself with him—with Di's father.

When they got upstairs his host produced wine and cigars, and flung himself into the easy chair.

"Won't you come with me?" he said. "I've heard of some new ground down in the south-east, where you can live snugly and cheaply, you know—always a great matter that, for a poor man like me. It hasn't got into the guide-books yet. Blackburn told me of it; he's keeping it a secret, in case the place should get talked of and the prices be raised. A find like that is as good as a treasure."

Malleson had pushed aside his unfilled glass. He stood up and leaned against the mantel-piece; he felt as if he were in a dream, and his voice sounded odd and harsh to himself when at last he spoke.

"What is that they are saying about you?" he asked abruptly.

Mr. Ouvry shrugged his shoulders once more.

"How can I tell you?" he said, almost as if he found the question amusing. "They will say anything."

"Is it true?" said Malleson again, hardly knowing why he asked the question. He knew it was true.

"I suppose most of us have committed a few peccadilloes in our day," said the other, with an air of answering patiently. "You can always find something to rake up against a man if you go far enough back, and you may trust the women to worm out your secrets if you have any."

"Does Di know of this?" Malleson demanded suddenly, as a new fear crossed his mind. He was not for a moment deceived by this easy protestation of innocence—of being no worse than another—and he took no pains to hide his scorn.

"Di knows nothing to my discredit," said her father quietly, and for the first time with, perhaps, a touch of shame. "She is a good child. She loves me."

"She would not be so base as to tell her," said Ralph, unconsciously doing his thinking aloud.

Mr. Ouvry looked at him sharply, but the next moment he spoke lightly.

"My dear fellow," he said, "I think you are all using me very badly. I speak to you as one man of the world to another—is it fair to gather up all a man's youthful sins, and to hurl them at him when he has had time to forget them? I grant you I committed follies enough in my day; as for money I never understood anything about it—I never had enough of it. I

don't pretend to be nicer than others; I dare say I have been worse than many—less virtuous, perhaps, than our friend the major—but I ask you again, is it fair to judge and condemn me on the mere word of a spiteful woman—a disappointed woman, I may say?” He smiled to himself. “You know the ladies are always given to exaggeration.”

“I don't want to know any of your secrets,” said Ralph, using the fewest possible words. “If it is a question of money, I have some that I don't want.”

The older man looked at him with mild surprise. He honestly failed to understand him; he also honestly believed that he was being very badly used.

“Are you proposing to lend it to me?” he asked. “My dear fellow, it's hardly a safe thing to do. With the best will in the world to remember, I might forget to return it.”

“I am thinking only of your daughter,” said Malleson haughtily. “Understand that nothing but the wish to save her pain would induce me to meddle in your affairs.”

“Di is a good child,” said her father softly; “and my dear boy, as to my affairs, you know as much of them as I do. The lady makes a claim on me, it would seem. I gather that is what they are talking about. She may be

right; I don't deny it; and you come and offer me money to meet it. That I can understand; so far it seems plain enough to me."

"Let me know how much you want."

Malleson looked steadily at Di's empty chair, and at her work-basket with the bit of work hanging out of it. He felt if he took his eyes from these reminders of her that his scorn would leap out and wither his companion.

"Thank you," said Mr. Ouvry pleasantly. "As I said just now, I never had enough money. It is always acceptable; and, as you hint, it is as well to settle the most absurd demands, if it were only to silence the chatter of the ladies. Then you won't come south with me?"

"No," said Malleson curtly, lifting his cap and turning away without so much as a good-night.

He walked quickly through the city. When he got out beyond the streets into the open country on which the stars looked down, he paused. He had been walking at a furious pace; and the man he had left behind was smoking quietly and at his ease. He had no superfluous sensibility; he had not imagination enough to feel uncomfortable.

"Oh, Di," said Ralph, with a groan, "what hard things I have to do for you!"

He had gone further than he thought. He

had reached that high north suburb, where the houses are lonely and few. In one of them he saw a light twinkling feebly ; it was very high up, and it came from the little room where Miss Piper sat solitary among the relics of the past. He looked at it, and a great wish seized him to go and spend an hour with the little spinster, and to talk to her of Di.

He remembered how the girl loved this foolish, feeble little woman, and how she, in her turn, clung to and almost worshipped Di. He wanted to hear her gentle prattle of how she missed her ; her hourly wonders of what she was doing in the great, wicked world ; her sighs and hopes that she would come back to them soon.

He wanted to get rid of the sick distaste of life that oppressed him, to recover the old saving belief in human goodness, to forget all he had just seen and heard.

CHAPTER X.

Cel. "But is all this for your father?"

Ros. "No; some of it is for my father's child. O, how full of briars is this working-day world!"

WHEN Di put her arms round her cousin's neck, she could hardly tell what impulse led her to ease her mind of its burden, but in ten minutes everything had been told.

She could not have confided her trouble to Madame Lavoisier, who appeared to be a much more sympathetic person, nor yet to Lady Malleson. Perhaps it was Bell's great reputation for common-sense that made her seem a refuge from the wild doubts that were assailing her. Bell, with her clear, cold way of looking at things, would soon dissipate fears that were no doubt imaginary.

But Bell was strangely and dreadfully silent.

She had learnt something else, something more than she was meant to know, and this revelation that came to her in faltering words and pauses of silence, seemed to her more


disastrous than the unmasking of her uncle. But for Di's pain, she would almost have taken a kind of righteous pleasure in the poetic justice that was being dealt out to him; even the best of us rejoice when Tartuffe is found out. But with Di's tragic, woe-begone young face confronting her, Miss Bell remembered to be merciful.

"Of course it is not true," Di said, first defiantly; and then, when her cousin did not at once reply, she said again, "Of course it isn't," but this time falteringly.

"Some of it isn't true," Bell spoke at last, dropping her eyes; "I'm very sure of that. And it was all so long ago——"

"Then that was why you pitied me!" said Di, feeling as if the last wave of bitterness had passed over her.

"Did I show it you? I only meant to be kind." Bell spoke humbly. She was sorry, yet she felt it was a case for bracing treatment. "There is no good to be gained by magnifying matters," she went on, taking courage. "I can't have you making yourself ill and miserable about this. You must rouse yourself, and not brood over it. If my uncle was—unfortunate" (it cost her a struggle with conscience to use this word), "that is all past ages ago. We can't tell anything of the circumstances,



and we have no business to judge. There is far too much ignorant fault-finding in the world," she said, feeling that her defence was very weak, and taking refuge in sententiousness.

Di smiled faintly. It was so easy to tell her not to worry; and as for judging, Bell's opinion had not been hard to read.

"If you would leave me alone for a little—just an hour or so—I'll come down at dinner-time," she said in her sick misery at finding herself uncontradicted.

"You had much better go to bed," said Bell decidedly, removing the quilt and smoothing the sheet. "You would not care to see any one to-day."

"No one will come," said Di quickly, meaning that one person would not come, and thinking she, too, with a thankful heart, that Essex was beyond the reach of immediate news.

"No, very likely not; but you will rest better. I will bring you up some dinner."

"I don't want any dinner."

"That's all nonsense. You will eat what I bring you."

Di submitted unresistingly, and let herself be tucked up carefully. Bell darkened the room, and went away with a parting admonition that she was to go to sleep and not to think, leaving her at last to merciful silence.

Miss Fullarton's movements that afternoon were very mysterious. She denied herself to visitors, and went about the house with a great appearance of business.

Madame, from the depths of her easy-chair, followed her wistfully with her looks. She had a letter in her pocket, and she was burning to disclose its contents, but Bell's mood was not propitious. Madame's offers to go and sit with the little cousin, who was supposed to have a headache, were declined.

"You had better leave her alone," said Bell, with ominous gravity, going on with her task of collecting the little bits of personal property scattered about the room. A sudden rage for tidiness seemed to have seized her.


"Packing already!" said madame at last, as a suspicion of the truth flashed on her.

Then Bell came and stood near her by the window. Her arms were full of neat little parcels.

"You will drop them. Much better let Morris do that, my child."

"Morris has more than she can do already. We must go away."

"In a week—yes." Madame bowed to the necessity with a sigh. "But is it needful to make one's self uncomfortable eight days too soon?"



"But we can't wait a week. We must go at once—to-morrow."

She laid down her burden carefully on the tiger-skin at madame's feet, and clasped her hands.

"I wanted to tell you," she said solemnly; "but you mustn't contradict me. I am quite sure I am right. Something has happened, and we must go away at once—before——"

"Before the young man can return from the country?"

Madame smiled at the young girl's earnest face, and at the length of her upper lip. This off-hand way of settling what she supposed might be a lover's difference amused her.

"How did you find out?" Bell demanded.

Madame was charmed with this tribute to her acuteness.

"I have two eyes in my head," she said. "He has displeased her, and you are going to punish him by carrying her off, eh?"

"No, not that; but she must never see him again. He is a very nice young man; but she will soon forget him. I have not made up my mind that she cares for him at all."

"Perhaps if one were to wait and see," madame hinted softly. She did not like to be deprived in this summary manner of a romantic interest that gave a flavour to life.

"That is just what we must not do," Bell rejoined, in her dogmatic way. "She must never be tempted. She could not marry him; she must never marry any one at all. She will come to see it herself by-and-by."

"She has been giving her a little history of the father," madame immediately said to herself, marvelling at the slender stock of tact with which some people are endowed; but aloud she only remarked—

"We can't forbid him to visit Scotland."

"I know. Of course he would follow us, and that is why we must not go there." She spoke with great firmness. She had made the heroic resolve to abandon her native country for the sake of Di, who was to be healed and cured by a season of foreign travel.

Madame put her hand into her pocket and felt the letter there.

"The best place to distract one's self——" she was beginning lightly, but Bell interrupted her sternly.

"No, not Paris. How could you be so unfeeling! A great staring, noisy place like that!"

"There is so much to see; and in these cases one must throw one's self into gaieties. There must not be time to think. Ah! my child, I have had so much experience."

Bell shook her head.

"You don't understand, Di. She would not like it. What we want is a quiet place, away from everybody here. Do you remember that little village near the Rhine, that you admired so much?"

"I remember the sauer kraut and the sausages and the hardness of the beds. Oh yes, I remember it." She gave a little shudder.

"It was very nice. You said yourself it was delightfully rural. And you learned so much German, talking with that old colonel or major with the wig."

"He was explaining the German attitude in the war," madame protested faintly. "Of course he could not convince me; but it is only fair to listen to both sides."

"Oh, quite fair. Perhaps he will be there again to drink the waters, and you can finish the argument. Besides, if you are very nice indeed," she added, with something almost approaching a caress, "I'll think about Paris in the autumn or winter, or perhaps next spring."

"What a pity there is not to be a wedding." Madame spoke plaintively, hardly consoled by this dim and uncertain prospect. "Think of the trousseau! We might have gone there now about the clothes."

"You must not dream of such a thing."

Bell grew solemn again. "Di must never marry. I always told you so."

"Why did you encourage him, then?"

"I didn't encourage him," said Bell indignantly. "Am I to suppose that every man who comes to the house is going to fall in love with one of us, and to shut the door on him to save ourselves from the danger? I didn't think you were so silly!"

"Oh, I am very foolish," said madame, laughing softly. "I have heard of young people having hearts."

"Nonsense!" said Bell sharply. "Di may have as much heart as she likes, but not for *that* sort of thing. And I don't think it is such a very miserable fate." She lifted up her head. "For my part, I think it is better to leave the experiment alone."

"He will marry the other one. She will not refuse him."

"Oh, very likely." Bell pressed her lips together. "Men are like that. If they can't get one, another will do."

"She will do very well. She is very pretty."

"I don't think she is nice."

"Ah, she is English, poor thing," said madame, without a suspicion of a smile.

Bell looked at her sharply. Then she stooped to pick up her parcels.

"We are wasting time," she said, "and there is so much to do. You must help me."

"And the servants, have you considered their objections?"

"I don't make my arrangements to suit them," said the young mistress of the house firmly.

"It is the age of obedient mistresses," murmured madame. "I hope you have prepared Morris's mind."

"I told her first," Bell acknowledged reluctantly. "She will go with us."

"Then there is nothing more to be said. If Morris consents, I am dumb."

"And you will not tell any one where we are going? It is for Di. You must see that it is best for her; you know I am only thinking of saving her pain," she said, with a touch of entreaty in her tone.

"My child, we will fly," said madame, rising gracefully. "I seal my lips; it is a profound secret. But he will follow us," she said to herself. "If he is the young man I take him to be, we shall see him before so very long."

Where was the robust common-sense with which Miss Bell's friends were so eager to credit her? They had a good many faults to find in her. They discovered her to be cold and undemonstrative, full of "notions," absurdly

proud of her nationality ; but these defects were always balanced in this mental summing up by her undue share of sound practical judgment.

"She's so sensible," cried the critics. But if she was indeed the wise young woman they took her to be, would she so steadily have counselled her cousin to fly? Would she not have hesitated a moment before she condemned two innocent young people to a perfectly useless and unnecessary sacrifice? Was it wise, oh calm and farseeing Miss Bell, to despoil two lives for the sake of a phantom—an old shadow of wrong and shame? Was life to be discrowned and love denied because one gentleman had strayed from the right path in the days of his hot youth? Was it not said of old, that there comes a moment when loyalty to father and to mother must cease?

Some such vague thought was passing through Di's mind, though she did not give it expression. She was leaning back among the pillows, and there was a great shadow of trouble on her young face.

Bell had seated herself on the edge of the bed, and was saying, in that calm, passionless voice of hers, that they might as well go away to-morrow; and why not abroad? She tried to remark easily that it would be a pleasant change, but the words stuck in her throat.

"I am sure you must see that it is best," she said lamely.

Di knew very well what was meant. The existence of such a person as Felix Chester had not been even remotely hinted at, but each girl was well aware of what was passing in the other's mind. They were to steal out of England secretly, before the young man could come back triumphant and successful, to trouble them with his appeals and his protests.

"I suppose you are right," Di said quietly. She had thought of it all to weariness, and now she could think no more. She yielded to Bell's stronger will and stifled her own lingering doubts. It was only a little while ago that she had wondered whether loyalty to Philippa demanded any further sacrifice, and now she must go away without seeing Felix again, without hearing the message from Ralph that was to decide so much.

"Oh, padre," she said softly under her breath. She did not want to go to him, not yet; not till she could forget a little.

"I dare say Germany will be very nice," she said, with a pitiful pretence at cheerfulness; "but you wanted to go to Scotland."

"Yes, but we can go another time—later. You will stay with me always, now, Di. You will learn to love Scotland, too."

Di said nothing, but she knew that the time would come when she should return home and take up the old life—only not quite yet.

“I’ll get up and pack,” she said, sliding off the bed in spite of Bell’s remonstrances.

That young woman took a stern view of duty, but there was remorse and relenting in her heart. It took the shape of gruel and negus, of oppressive attentions and offers of help, till Di was fain to resist with an appearance of mirth, and to protest that she was quite well.

“Look, you forgot your flowers, and they are all withered—only fit to throw out.” She laughed as she looked at the faded hedgerow treasures, that had come from the green Essex lanes. “You thought they could live on nothing, but they couldn’t; they are dead.”

She whisked down her gowns from the wardrobe and began to fold them with feverish haste and such an air of energy, that Bell, who had a limited imagination, was more than ever sure that she was right.

“I think my plan will do; it will turn out very well,” she said, sedately entering the drawing-room. “I was sure she didn’t really care for him.”

“Then we may dine,” said madame comfortably.

Under this energetic young person’s rule

everything was accomplished by the next afternoon. The aggrieved servants were dismissed, and the keys delivered over to the house agent's care.

When the last box was strapped, and there was still an idle hour or two to be consumed before there was a decent pretext for driving to the station, Di slipped out to post a letter she had sat up late to write.

Now, who should she meet at the corner near the pillar-box but Philippa, who was also about to post a letter. Di's pulses gave a faster throb, but she was hardly surprised. She had somehow known instinctively that they should meet; and perhaps Philippa, in spite of her exclamations, was not altogether unprepared for the interview. She had an elaborate air of taking it to be the most natural thing in the world that she should walk to Kensington with her correspondence, as if the receiving offices at Brompton were to be regarded distrustfully; and she said nothing of having paced the quiet street for an hour or more before finally resigning her letter.

She made a little rush at Di, and seized her hand.

"How nice this is!" she said, with all her old cordiality. "We see so little of each other now. I think this stiff old England must be

freezing us into propriety—prunes, prudence, and the rest of it. What has become of you all this time, Di ? ”

“ I don't know. I can't stay now, Philippa.”

“ Is Miss Bell such a jailer ? ”

“ It is good-bye,” said Di gently. “ We are going away this evening.”

“ To-night ? So Miss Bell is homesick ? Let me look at you, little one. Do you know, you look like a young lady at the end of her first season. Have you been dissipating so much ? I think your cousin is quite right—you want some Scotch breezes.”

“ We are not going to Scotland.”

“ Not ! Then you must be a witch.” Philippa showed all her dimples.

“ We are going to Germany, to a little village somewhere near the Rhine. It is far away, and a quiet place, where nobody would be likely to come. That is why we are going. It is a place where English people are never seen.”

“ Di,” said Philippa, speaking with sudden earnestness, “ why are you going away ? Am I not to ask ? You used to tell me things.”

“ Don't you know ? ” Di looked at her steadily. Philippa's blue eyes fell before the glance.

“ I am going away because—I have been

hearing sad things. It is good-bye, Philippa, good-bye, for always, and—I hope you will be very happy.”

The faltering voice ceased suddenly, and when Philippa looked up Di was gone. She made a hasty step forward. Her lips parted. “Di,” she called faintly, “Di, come back.” Then some people came out of a neighbouring house, and the quiet street seemed full of their laughter and talk. With a sudden revulsion of feeling, Philippa turned and went her way, her better impulse chilled within her.

And so this dear intimacy passed out of her life.

CHAPTER XI.


"Quien no ama, no vive."

Duke F. "Can it be possible that no man saw them?"

1st Lord. "I cannot hear of any that did see her."

Who more gay, more full of high hopes than Felix, as he rode through the liberal green Essex lanes? The house doubly deserved the praises of his friend. It was a place to make the heart of its possessor swell with a gentle pride. He looked with an air of ownership at the inscription over the arched entrance, and he thought bluff King Hal the most jovial and virtuous of princes, and Anne Boleyn, whose name and memory cling to the room in the turret, the most beautiful lady in the world, except one.

The long, low panelled room which had echoed to the rioting of princes, should be filled again with a worthier mirth. He was a young man of taste, and he had already, in imagination, furnished it with strange hangings of oriental stuffs, with Venetian mirrors, brasses, bronzes, and replicas of meek madonnas and martyred




saints. There should be tapestry, too, such as he remembered in a little room in the far south; and the Rastro should be made to yield up all its hidden treasures. How good it was to be rich! He had never before known the full charm of wealth.

Beneath the windows was a ragged garden, in which he saw great possibilities of beauty. The ancient care-taker, who hobbled with him through the echoing corridors hinted that the place needed a mistress. Felix thought him the cleverest old man, and gave him a noble gratuity. He was in a rosy mood, and failed to see damp or mould, decline or decay. He listened in an indulgent humour to the garrulous outpourings of his companion, who plied him with story after story, thinking nothing too marvellous for this greedy hearer. Life was beautiful, and England fairer than any land across the sea. He had never felt so patriotic, so full of longing to possess a home in his own land. He said a great many wise things to himself about the necessity of settling down and ceasing to rove; he recalled much excellent advice, to which he had before given but a cold attention. And now he, too, was eager to give hostages to fortune; to prove himself worthy of the blessings that had been granted to others.

He seemed to see himself a better and a manlier man as he walked about the old house and thought of the sweet girlish presence that might fill it soon. He lingered so long that the late summer twilight spent itself, and the old man lit a guttering candle, happy to guide this princely youth so long as it might be his pleasure.

"Take care, sir!" he cried in his quavering voice, as Felix stumbled over an unseen step and recovered himself with a laugh. Then he told another ghostly and blood-freezing tale of a tragedy that was associated with that spot, at which Felix laughed the more. He was in strangely high spirits, and astonished the old man, who had seen many foolish gentlemen but none so foolish as this; he could have wished such a visitor every day of his life, he thought, as he glanced at the coins in his palm, and then at Felix speeding away in the distance.

It was ten miles to the small market town where the railway ended, but he was in no haste. The summer night was sweet, and there was somewhere a veiled and vaporous moon, that revealed the white road twisting between the broad and lavish hedgerows. There was no sound abroad, except the regular beat of his horse's hoofs, and now and then the bark of a dog yelping with impotent anger behind



a farm-yard gate. By-and-by, when the cold air touched the heated earth, wreaths of mist began to rise from the fields, and to grow and spread and cling about the trees, which presently took the most fantastic shapes and looked like a company of giant spectres striding across the sleeping land.

Felix slackened his rein. His heart was full of happy dreams. He could scarcely believe his good fortune, and yet he felt more than hopeful; for she had promised to listen to Ralph's message, and had he not read the timid kindness in her eyes?

The virtuous little market town was abed when he rode over its stony street, and hardly a twinkling light greeted him; but the sleepy ostler, who took his horse, felt sure in anticipation of a handsome gratuity, for he had never seen a man look on better terms with the world.

And so, despite the theory which some people hold, of presentiments, warnings, and intercommunion of souls, Felix went back to London the happiest and hopefulest of foolish lovers, and knew no more than his neighbour in the railway carriage that Di was already hundreds of miles beyond his reach.


That blow was to descend upon him in the afternoon, when he went to Kensington in a hansom. He banged the doors open and sprang

out on the pavement, cheerful and brave. Fate was going to be kind to him, and give him the chances he sought; and lo! fate met him with a closed door and drawn blinds, and a card stuck in the window, with the intimation that the house was to let, furnished—"Apply to Mr. Mortimer Sharp."

Felix stared blankly at the printed words. Not Aladdin, when he was first whisked away on the carpet, was more full of wonderment than he. He passed his hand across his eyes, and asked himself if he were in a dream. Then he tried the next house, sure that he laboured under some odd delusion as to the number, though he could have sworn that the trim and precise plot of garden ground bore unquestionable witness to Miss Bell's presence.

But this hope speedily deserted him. The maid who opened the door declined loftily to give him any help. She didn't know what had become of the ladies, though she did see their luggage—and plenty of it, too—carried out. "She wasn't given to take notice of her neighbours," she remarked, with a toss of her head.

Back then once more to the High Street, into another hansom, and off as fast as the horse would go to the agent whose name was announced on the card; and who gave him a bland reception, thinking him to be a client,



but waxed cooler presently, as Felix grew pressing in his inquiries.

"Miss Fullarton only had the house to the end of the month," he explained.

"But it's eight days to the end of the month," Felix exclaimed weakly.

"Parties don't always stay to the last." Mr. Mortimer Sharp spoke civilly, but not encouragingly. "He understood that Miss Fullarton had a place in Ireland, or Scotland, or it might be in the north of England; he really couldn't say where."

"Of course she has gone to Scotland. I thought of that," said Felix in an injured tone; "but it's ten days before her time."

Mr. Mortimer Sharp once more "really couldn't say. Parties often left a week before their time was up; there was nothing unusual in that. Miss Fullarton had said nothing when she wrote to him about the keys. Perhaps she might have left her address with some of her friends; or the gentleman might apply to some of the tradespeople in the neighbourhood; the servants were likely enough to have mentioned their mistress's plans."

Felix looked at his adviser gloomily. Wasn't he a friend; and who had a better right than he to be told of their intentions?

Lady Malleeson was superintending the bath-

ing of the twins that same evening when a loud summons was heard at the front door, and a young gentleman was announced. He was waiting below in urgent haste to see her.

She went down, trembling and afraid. Ever since she had discovered unsuspected depths in her husband's life, she had walked in fear of retribution overtaking her. From beyond the grave Roderick's will seemed still to overshadow her.

It was a relief to find that the drawing-room held no more alarming presence than that of Felix, even though it was an impatient and lugubrious Felix.

"Back again!" she said, welcoming him gladly. "I couldn't think who it was. It was the housemaid who let you in, and she did not know you."

"I only got back this afternoon. I should not have come so late, but I wanted particularly to see you."

"I was putting the boys to bed," said Lady Malleeson, accounting with a smile for her apron. "The little darlings splash about so."

"How the boys must hate me for taking you away."

"Oh no; do sit down. Barton will see that their feet are warm. I can thoroughly trust them to her. She is such a comfort."

"Yes," said Felix absently. Then abruptly, "When did Miss Fullarton go?"

"Indeed, I don't know," said the widow, clasping her hands, and growing eager at once. "I thought you would be sure to know. It seems so strange to go like that, without a word."

"Then you did not know——"

"Nothing at all. And I think it almost—unfeeling. I liked Di so much, and I thought I had at last found a friend," she sighed plaintively.

"Women are inexplicable," said Felix, with a short laugh. "Miss Fullarton found England unendurable, I suppose, and has fled to the north."

"Do you think they have gone there?"

"Why not? We all know Miss Bell's virtuous love of her country."

"Nurse met Di; she had taken the boys to Kensington Gardens, to the flowery walk, you know, where it is so safe——"

"Yes," said Felix, with smothered impatience.

"And Di stopped to speak to them. She was so fond of them, especially of little Ralph."

"I am sure of it. Did she send any message?"

"Only that she was going away, and would not have time to come and say good-bye. I think I could have found time; I think I could

have made some little sacrifice to friendship," she said, gently insinuating herself. Then, seeing he was not listening, she added, "Nurse thought her looking ill."

"Ill?" He roused himself. "Then that is why they have gone off so suddenly." He felt full of remorse for his hard thoughts. Why had he judged her so harshly? She was ill; and she had been whisked away by Miss Bell, without a moment to give to her friends.

"She might have spared five minutes, I think."

"She has treated none of us any better," said Felix, able to smile now. "I called on Mrs. Henshaw this afternoon, and she had seen nothing of her either."

"Miss Fullarton is so decided. I never could be energetic—like that; but, of course, if she thought Di looking ill——"

"I am going up there to-night. I'll let you know how she is. And she will write to you herself, of course."

"Going there!—to Scotland, to-night?" Lady Malleeson rose in her surprise. Felix was standing, too, as if impatient to be off on the spot.

"Yes," he said, smiling. "Can't you guess why?"

"Oh, not Miss Fullarton!"

"Miss Fullarton!" He stared, and then

burst out laughing, as he had not laughed for the last six hours. "Have I kept my secret so well as that? I didn't know I was so clever!"

It was never his way to hide anything, and he had had nobody to confide in since he relieved Ralph of his presence. It all came pouring out, his hopes and fears, his disappointment.

The widow listened perplexed, then gradually interested, and finally enthusiastic. She had had other views and secretly cherished schemes; but where is the woman who fails to take pleasure in a romantic attachment? It had never been a difficult matter to mould the thoughts of this gentle lady into any desired pattern, as the late baronet very well knew, and Felix, without trying at all, presently discovered that he had a new ally and warm supporter.

She insisted that he would stay and dine, and ordered up the claret that Ralph had instructed her was to be kept for state occasions.

"I do so hope you will succeed," she said again and again, as they sat over dessert.

"I venture to hope, at least," he answered modestly.

"She will listen; I am sure she will listen," she cried, clasping her hands. It seemed to her as if no one could resist this handsome,

kind young man, whom already she felt to be an old friend. Oh, fickle woman! Where now had vanished those touching imaginations of Ralph in his lonely and untidy bachelor quarters? Ralph, who had given up so much for others and was no longer to be compensated with the best!

Thus consoled with creature comforts, and sustained with fervent good wishes, Felix went off comfortably in a first-class carriage to the north, confident that his virtue and his patience were about to be rewarded at last.

All this time the world was showing a dismal enough face to Philippa and her mother. Philippa passed much of her time with the Smiths, spending a little fortune on cabs to take her to and from that hospitable mansion, where she was received with flattering cordiality.

Perhaps she wished to avoid the unwelcome attentions of Mr. Ferryman, who still haunted Brompton, full of determination, and unaware of Felix Chester's presence in England. Perhaps, as she was a young lady of courage, and no longer afraid of this ferocious admirer, she only wished to guard against too frequent opportunities of talk with her mother.

Yet at this time Mrs. Henshaw showed no inclination to be confidential. One day she said carelessly—

"Mr. Chester called here this afternoon, when you were out."

"I saw his card," said Philippa, calmly.

"He was very pleasant, though a little dull, I thought. It is a pity you were not at home. An old woman is poor company, as I told him."

"Did he—did he say anything about Miss Fullarton?"

"He said he understood she had left London. It was news to me. I suppose they have gone to Scotland."

"They have not gone to Scotland."

"He talked of running up to the north for a day or two," she continued, showing no curiosity as to Miss Fullarton's movements. She was, indeed, intent upon her knitting, and her talk was subordinated to the necessity of counting the stitches. She was working warm garments for the poor, which is one way of crying quits with conscience. "He is going to make arrangements about the shootings, I suppose. He says he may have to come back to London soon. I asked him to come and see us when he returns; it's so lonely for a young man in London, at the end of the season."

"Why did you ask him?" said Philippa bitterly. "He didn't show any eagerness to come before."

"He's an old friend," said Mrs. Henshaw, in

that tone of reproof she sometimes used when Philippa showed signs of rebellion; "and if there is one thing I dislike and despise more than another, it is fickleness. You know that proverb about being faithful to old friends—and I do hope you will be polite; you are sometimes so brusque."

"Oh, I will be polite." Philippa laughed, but not pleasantly. She longed to ask, "What did you say to him? and why did Di go abroad?" She had a growing suspicion that her mother knew, and could have told her if she chose; but though she opened her lips, the words did not come. The moment passed unused, and the impulse to face the truth did not again visit her.

"How soon can we go away?" she asked, lingering at the door.

"Very soon now."

"I thought you were waiting to let the house."

"That need not stand in the way. I am ready to sacrifice anything to please you. You see, I *do* consider your wishes——"

"My wishes——" Philippa drew a long breath. "Have we money? That is the chief question, it seems to me."

"We have money enough."

"I am glad to hear it," said Philippa signifi-

cantly. "I never remember when we had enough."

"My dear child," said Mrs. Henshaw smoothly, "you know I never trouble you about such questions. You have my sensitive shrinking from all these stupid details. It is enough that one of us should be plagued. I want you to enjoy yourself; I want you to be happy. You may get a new dress, if you like; we can afford it."

"A new dress!" said Philippa, with an odd smile. "I don't think that would add to my happiness, thank you, mamma."

"If you are going out, be sure to take a cab," her mother called after her amiably. "It is too hot for you to walk."

Mrs. Henshaw was at this time full of a pleasant gentleness. She was very kind to Philippa, and treated her as an indulged child, out of whose path in life all difficulties were to be swept. That was perhaps the reason why she said nothing of an important communication that had reached her from Madrid, and that threw her into a delighted flutter hard to hide.

She did not tell herself that her plans had succeeded. She said instead that she was now, at last, getting her due. Her quarrel with existence was made up. When she heard an impatient ring at the bell, and a quick, familiar

step on the stair, she told herself that this, too, was part of her "reward." The only drawback to all this pleasantness was the uncertainty of Philippa's moods; there was no telling how she might take the news, which her mother prudently resolved to keep to herself. She had lost her gay good-humour, and was silent and restless.

The excitement of driving about in cabs in order to circumvent Mr. Ferryman had gone off; and even the homage of the Smiths failed to satisfy her. She looked darkly sometimes at her handsome, smiling mother, and refused to be consoled with new bonnets or many-buttoned gloves.


She showed no surprise, however, when in a few days Felix reappeared. She did not fail to notice that he was changed: moody and silent, and hardly polite. At the sight of his downcast face, the young lady all at once became very gay and gracious.

"It must be so dull for you after Scotland," she said sweetly.

"Oh yes; it was so lively up there."

"How self-denying of you to tear yourself away! Why aren't you shooting? I thought it was the time to begin and kill things."

"Henderson is going to do my share of the slaughter."



"How generous! And you are going to stay on here? I thought all the fortunate people had left London; the fashionable papers say it is quite empty. Even the Smiths are off to Switzerland. Don't you find it very quiet and stupid without your friends?"

"Philippa, ring for some tea," Mrs. Henshaw interrupted. "I can't do without tea, even in the hottest weather. They say it makes you cooler after."

"Perhaps Mr. Chester would like something else better, mamma," said the young lady graciously, as Felix rose to pull the bell. "What is the national beverage in Scotland?"

Thus sometimes the two young people, who were such old friends, sparred and bandied small sarcasms; sometimes the young man was inclined to be melancholy and moody, and sometimes the young woman relented and was kind.

For Felix began to haunt the Brompton house at this time. What else was there left for him to do? Lady Malleson, alarmed by the pale looks of the twins, had fled to Brighton. London was indeed empty; there was no one in it, except the few millions that never go away. Felix stayed on, because he lacked the energy to go elsewhere. His expedition to Scotland had, as we know, been fruitless; and his present opinion of that country was of the

poorest. He had telegraphed frantically to Ralph, and got back in due time an answer that Miss Ouvry was not expected in Madrid, and that her father, too, was absent from the city. By the next post came a letter, saying the same thing over again. It was an eminently sensible letter. Not for the world would Ralph have allowed a hint of his renewed hope to peep out; but if she did not care for Felix was there not a chance for him?

"My dear boy," he wrote, "don't you see, she means you to take it for her answer?" Ralph paused as he penned the words to smile at the naïveté of the act. He never dreamed that she had hidden herself for quite other reasons than disinclination to pain her lover. "You thought she was putting some constraint on herself, but she is as true as the day. She has gone to save you the pain of a second disappointment. Haven't I known her since she was a baby? Of course I know it's hard on you, but the best thing you can do is to forget her, if you can. You are in luck to be out of this. It's as dull as ditch-water, and as hot as the inferno. St. John has been appointed to Vienna; there are some of us who won't go into mourning. The lady is in Paris, holding subtle consultations with Worth for the electrifying of the Viennese, etc., etc.

"P.S.—When you come to think over it, you will see that mine is the common-sense view of the affair. Of course I'm awfully sorry for you all the same."

"Confound his common-sense!" said Felix, tearing this epistle into little bits. Ralph's words confirmed his own doubts and fears, and yet he almost hated him for writing them. He was a very unhappy young man at this time. He hung about London, though it was deserted by all his friends. He avoided the men—condemned to remain in town—whom he used to nod to at the club, and drank the best wine with the air of a martyr. He was a perfect kill-joy at any place of amusement where he showed face, taking his pleasure with more than British sadness.

He had fallen into a way of dropping in to the Brompton house at all hours. Mrs. Henshaw was kind to him, and made much of him, asking no questions. Not all Ned Henderson's glowing accounts of the bags that were being made on the northern moors could induce him to revisit Kylmure. He drifted on from day to day, hardly caring what became of him. Sometimes pride and anger were uppermost, and he told himself he would cease to think of her, and never try to see her more. The next moment he was crying out that he could not

live without her, and would find her if he searched the whole world through.

It may easily be seen that this was hardly the pleasantest of guests to lounge long afternoons in a lady's drawing-room, but Mrs. Henshaw made no complaint.

"Poor young man! it's so dull for him," she would say. "We must sacrifice ourselves a little to make it cheerful for him."

So she renounced her afternoon nap, and talked pleasantly to him while she knitted, ignoring his silence or his grumpy replies.

He was not quite insensible to so much kindness, and the habit grew on him to go to her for distraction, for consolation. Had his affections been less wholly engaged, there would have been danger for him in this renewed intimacy, for it is the veriest commonplace that a heart is never so easily caught as at the rebound. Philippa and he quarrelled and disputed more than ever, it is true, but those who are learned in such matters do not consider that an unhopeful sign, and when she choose to be gracious it was difficult to resist her.

One hot evening, when he went as usual after dinner, he heard her singing. The windows were wide open, and the sounds came floating out clearly to the dull street. She had a nice little voice, which culture had made the most of.

"Don't stop," he said, as he entered the drawing-room; "go on."

He went and stood behind her. It was a German song she sang; something about a deserter who was shot in presence of his betrothed. Felix paid little heed to the words, but there was a hint in the music of restrained pathos that touched him. He had been angry and hard all day, and now suddenly the flood-gates were set open.

"If I only knew where she had gone!" he said passionately, forgetting that he spoke aloud.

Philippa's hands paused on the keys, her voice faltered. Was she going to speak?

Before the words could come there was a little scream from the other side of the room.

"Oh, my beautiful Murano cup!" cried Mrs. Henshaw. "How could I be so careless! I must have knocked it over with my elbow."

"It is past mending," said Felix, who had gone to her, picking up the opalescent fragments.

"And it was made especially for me. I shall never forgive myself for my clumsiness." Her hands were trembling, her looks anxious.

By the time he had sufficiently consoled with her, everybody had seemingly forgotten his involuntary exclamation.

Philippa had taken no notice of the accident. She had finished her song, but she was playing a sprightly air with a touch of defiance in it. She looked up at him presently, when he came back to her side, with a strange mocking expression on her face.

"We are going away, too," she said.

"Going away!" he echoed, thinking suddenly how lonely he should be.

"Yes; why not? Why should we not go as well as others? Is England so delightful?"

"Where are you going?" he demanded.

"To Italy. Como, perhaps, then Venice and Rome."

"To Italy!" He gave an odd laugh. "Of course! Why did I not think of it? One can breathe there after this stiff, cold England; one can forget," he added under his breath. He seemed all at once to be in wildly gay spirits. "If I should turn up there, too, you won't forbid me, will you?" he cried. "You will give me a welcome?"

CHAPTER XII.

"But thou would'st not think how ill all's here,
About my heart: but it is no matter."

THREE or four times every day Bell took occasion to remark that her plan had succeeded admirably, and that, in fact, since Di was enjoying herself so much, there was the less need to regret Kilmure.

Madame Lavoisier, like a wise woman, listened and forebore to contradict her; and when Miss Bell continued, with the voice of conviction—

"She's getting over it nicely. I told you she never cared for him"—she only smiled, taking care that her amusement should not be visible.

It will be seen that nothing was ever said of Mr. Ouvry, whom Nemesis had overtaken. Was Di supposed to have "got over" that too? At least the subject was never touched on between the cousins. Since that night when Di had told out all her trouble, no word had passed her

step on the stair, she told herself that this, too, was part of her "reward." The only drawback to all this pleasantness was the uncertainty of Philippa's moods; there was no telling how she might take the news, which her mother prudently resolved to keep to herself. She had lost her gay good-humour, and was silent and restless.

The excitement of driving about in cabs in order to circumvent Mr. Ferryman had gone off; and even the homage of the Smiths failed to satisfy her. She looked darkly sometimes at her handsome, smiling mother, and refused to be consoled with new bonnets or many-buttoned gloves.

She showed no surprise, however, when in a few days Felix reappeared. She did not fail to notice that he was changed: moody and silent, and hardly polite. At the sight of his downcast face, the young lady all at once became very gay and gracious.

"It must be so dull for you after Scotland," she said sweetly.

"Oh yes; it was so lively up there."

"How self-denying of you to tear yourself away! Why aren't you shooting? I thought it was the time to begin and kill things."

"Henderson is going to do my share of the slaughter."


"How generous! And you are going to stay on here? I thought all the fortunate people had left London; the fashionable papers say it is quite empty. Even the Smiths are off to Switzerland. Don't you find it very quiet and stupid without your friends?"

"Philippa, ring for some tea," Mrs. Henshaw interrupted. "I can't do without tea, even in the hottest weather. They say it makes you cooler after."

"Perhaps Mr. Chester would like something else better, mamma," said the young lady graciously, as Felix rose to pull the bell. "What is the national beverage in Scotland?"

Thus sometimes the two young people, who were such old friends, sparred and bandied small sarcasms; sometimes the young man was inclined to be melancholy and moody, and sometimes the young woman relented and was kind.

For Felix began to haunt the Brompton house at this time. What else was there left for him to do? Lady Malleson, alarmed by the pale looks of the twins, had fled to Brighton. London was indeed empty; there was no one in it, except the few millions that never go away. Felix stayed on, because he lacked the energy to go elsewhere. His expedition to Scotland had, as we know, been fruitless; and his present opinion of that country was of the



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"There is a time when duty should cease to be a first consideration."

Di smiled.

"Duty?" she said. "I think I have forgotten mine now in staying so long away from him."

"I am older than you——" Bell began coldly, but Di stopped her with a gesture of rare petulance.

"What has age to do with it?" she said. "I can't see how that alters anything. He is my father. I love him."

Bell deigned no direct answer. She could hardly say, "You ought not to love your father"—that would be to rush right in the face of a direct commandment—but in her heart she felt that Di was weak and almost immoral in her laxity.

"I think we had better go down to breakfast," she said, putting the last neat touches to her dress. "There is no use continuing a discussion like this."

"No. Wait a minute." Di flew after her. "Bell, you have been ever so good to me, but you can't suppose, surely, that anything would make me forsake the padre? If you only knew! But your father died when you were a baby: and though madame is nice, she is not like a mother. So how can you know?"

"We'll talk of it another time." Miss Fullarton saw a figure appearing at the other end of the corridor, and she hated to be caressed in public. "You've ruffled my collar," she said. "If you will go down, I'll put it straight and follow you."

"I've ruffled her temper, too," thought poor Di, as she went away alone. How could she help it? It was preposterous to think that she was to remain for ever an exile, because—— She did not let herself dwell upon the "because;" she always put it away from her quickly. Love rose up, and criticism remained dormant. All the stronger impulses of her nature rushed towards the channels of tenderness and affection. The padre needed her, that was enough. And she had left him so long! She began to feel a great remorse for those weeks of silence to which she had consented. Since that horrible day when the world about her grew dark, she had not written to him or to Ralph. She had filled up her life with other things, and tried to put them out of it.

She was thinking of these things as she stood at the window of the salon, waiting for her cousin, who was grappling with a rebellious mood upstairs. She looked so grave, that a good German Frau, busy with some sad-coloured

knitting, began to think of consoling recipes, and determined to recommend herb-tea as a cure for every ill under the sun.

The bower under the lindens, at which Di was staring so absently, was empty now. The braves had departed, to pledge a brimming cup elsewhere, and she, too, was going.

On a sudden *heimweh* (that fine, untranslatable word) had seized her, and a longing, not to be denied, for the old familiar ways.

The old ways—and yet never again the same. She remembered Ralph's words as they sat near the little palace in the Florida—his law of life—"Dass wir entsagen müssen." How hard a doctrine that had seemed to be then, and now—was it not the law of her life too?

The good Frau was all the time wondering whether it was Herr Rittmeister Wendt or Herr Leutnant von Gersdorf, who had made so deep an impression on the flexible heart of the pretty Engländerinn.

"The Herr Leutnant is a beautiful man, nicht?" she said, advancing to the window with crafty overtures.

"Is he?" said Di absently, a little surprised, and fetching back her mind with difficulty to the point. "I don't think I know him."

"You sat next him at supper," said the lady reproachfully.

"Oh, that one!" she answered indifferently. "I thought him a little like a doll, so neat and small and nicely finished.

"He is much admired," said the lady, rather offended and very unbelieving. Had she not, with her own eyes, seen the gallant soldier talking to the English miss, who must have felt the honour in spite of her indifference?

"I don't understand him very well," said Di hastily. She saw her cousin coming, and went forward to meet her, anxious only to be reconciled.

It is not to be supposed that Bell gave up the battle so easily. She returned to the charge with undaunted vigour.

"I want you to consider it seriously," she said. "I don't want you to forsake your father. You might go to see him, or we might have him here" (this was a great stretch of magnanimity); "but you must see that there would be great advantages in having your home in England. I know how it will be if you go back there now; you will get yourself into trouble."

She spoke vaguely, but she meant, "That young man will come dancing round you again, and you will make a mess of both your lives; for of course you can never marry him."

To all this Di opposed silence chiefly; but she wrote her letter, and packed her trunk.

Bell was very valiant. She thought of new arguments in bed, and rose fresh to the attack in the morning. She battled bravely throughout the day, and remained unconquered in the evening. It was hard for this calm and sensible young person to find all her excellent arrangements set aside. She was so sure she could make a noble and beautiful thing out of Di's life, if she would only surrender it into her hands; but Di refused, and chose to take her fate into her own keeping.

Madame took no part at all in these discussions. She bided her time, and exchanged recipes and knitting patterns with the German lady. She was, to all appearance, serenely unconscious of the disputes that lengthened Miss Bell's upper lip, and made Di look so troubled.


But it was a losing battle Miss Bell fought, and at last she had the grace to recognize that she was defeated.

Her final surrender was characteristic.

"Di wishes to go home," she said one day, appearing suddenly at her friend's side.

Madame had been drinking her morning potion of the nauseous water that brought celebrity to the little Bad, and she set down her tumbler before elevating her eyebrows to the proper degree of surprise.

"To go home?" she echoed.



"Yes, to her father. He is her father; and of course she must do as he wishes."

"It will be very hot there." Madame was too wise to repeat the "of course," or otherwise to acquiesce.

"I have said all I can," Bell remarked briefly.

"You don't approve?" madame asked tentatively.

"No; but I can't hinder her. I don't want to be her jailer."

She was about to move away, but she turned abruptly and looked darkly at her companion.

"We must go with her to Paris," she said. "I think those Ponsonby people might have come here; but since they can't, or won't, I suppose we must go."

"One cannot allow a young girl to travel alone. No; it would not be right." Madame shook her head, as if she were examining the question for the first time, and had not written a week before to prepare the mind of M. Adolphe for their appearance.

"So you will get your wish at last, you silly woman," said Bell, allowing a smile to unbend her lips.

"And you will get some new dresses, my dear. If it were not that anything is good enough for the Germans, I should have hesitated to go about with you."

Thus madame was made happy at last, and Di was whirled away to the south, where love was waiting her, and the old familiar life, precious still, even if robbed of some of its early glory.

"You can always come back, you know," said Bell, who loved to be magnanimous. "I shall be ready for you at any time; it will make no difference at all to me. I want you to remember this, in case you should change your mind. My plans are not likely to alter," she said firmly, having indeed a very fixed theory of the way in which she should portion out her days.

"Thank you. You have been very good to me," said Di gratefully.

She was leaning out of the carriage, where the Ponsonbys were already seated, and her heart warmed to the prim, sedate cousin whom she had disappointed.

It was a final good-bye, because, though she did not say it, she knew she should not change her mind.

As she spoke, she caught a glimpse of a well-waxed moustache and a pair of twinkling patent boots, and it did not need the radiant smile on madame's face to enlighten her as to the owner of these possessions. She smiled back in sympathy; and so these familiar faces

passed away, and she sat down, resigning herself to Mr. Ponsonby's patronizing care. She never could understand why the fussy little man and his strong-minded wife were so kind, and yet so mysterious ; so anxious for her comfort, and yet so solemn over it.

Ralph met her at the station, and when she felt the warm clasp of his hand, she knew that everything had not gone from her. He was the same old Ralph, and he greeted her without anything to show that his heart was thumping at a faster pace than usual.

"How many boxes does it take to hold the wardrobe of a young lady fresh from Paris?" he asked, as he handed her into a cab.

"Just two. I'm not a Mrs. St. John. How was I to get any new clothes, when you wrote so peremptorily for me to come back?"

"We had better stop at the Calle de Montera then, and order some on the spot. How could you have the heart to deprive us of a new toilet!"

"So you only wanted to see my new dresses! Do you know you have never once said you are glad to see me." She looked at him reproachfully as they set out.

"I was afraid you might snub me. Maidens fresh from making the grand tour don't permit such liberties."

"Other people will be glad to see me," she said with dignity; and then she laughed. "Tell me about everybody."

"Miss Piper has been meditating a journey to England; she says one ought to travel when one is young. She wishes to hold out a forgiving hand to the Piper who has tarnished the family honour by entering the silk-trade. I only dissuaded her by telling her you were coming."

"Then the Piper cousin has been good to her again?"

"I think not. She did not let out anything of the kind when she proposed to go on her pilgrimage. We had quite a little breeze over the affair; Miss Barbara's wrath was sublime. She hinted darkly at straight-waistcoats and solitary confinement. As a vent to her energy she packed up the plate, and sent it to the embassy with a note that must have made Mr. Berry's hair stand on end."

"As if he weren't bald!" she said; and they both laughed. They were capable of the utmost foolishness in their pleasure in being together again.

"You want me," she said, shaking her head. "You can't get on without me."

"I did my best," said Ralph in a meek voice. "I had both ladies to tea separately. The tea

was of the strongest. If it could be known what diplomacy it took to persuade Miss Piper that it was the correct thing to cheer a bachelor's loneliness, they would have appointed me to Vienna instead of St. John."

"Then the St. Johns have left?"

"They are off, bag and baggage; Von Rosen and Meyers. in their train. I met Meyers lingering in the Preciados. He was a spectacle for gods and men to weep at."

"I suppose there are plenty of ladies in Vienna," said Di, with a touch of scorn. She could not trust herself to mention Philippa's name. It seemed to take a weight from her heart to know that Madrid was relieved of the American lady's presence. It was one pang the less, though she had prepared herself to be often wounded, and she was not ungrateful.

All this time Mr. Ouvry had not been mentioned.

"Your father is at home; I offered to meet you," Ralph said, as they drew up at the door. "Shall I come to see you in the evening? Or you will be tired, perhaps."

"Come now, don't leave me," she said, laying her hand for a moment on his.

She did not know why she suddenly wanted him to be with her, not to forsake her; and he, though he would infinitely rather have turned

away, followed her without a word. He could not tell her that for weeks he had never climbed the familiar stair; that from the hour when he had been forced into seeming partisanship with her father he had seen him but once, and that on a business he would fain forget.

Di went up the stair lightly, while he waited, glad of the excuse of the luggage. She never faltered or hesitated, but went straight to her father where he was standing with his back to the light. She threw back her cloak, and put her arms round his neck. She looked at him with her honest eyes full of timid, beseeching love. It was as if she pleaded, "Don't care for me the less because I know." Then she hid her face on his shoulder.

"I've come back to you, padre," she whispered, asking forgiveness for those weeks of silence.

"I thought you would come back," he said a little moved; and then, more lightly, "I couldn't do without my little girl, you know."

When Malleson came in, Mr. Ouvry was rolling a cigarette daintily between his long, gentlemanly fingers; and Di had taken off her hat, and was seated in her little chair by the window.

"I feel as if I had never been away," she said, but she smothered a sigh.

The two men nodded to each other.

"You forgot your purse," said Ralph, standing behind her and dropping it lightly into her lap.

"Ah, you want our good Ralph to look after you," said Mr. Ouvry, finishing his work with a last neat and dexterous movement. "And now you are hungry, aren't you, and want some breakfast? Concha is preparing a feast for you, but I don't recommend you to wait for that."

"Oh, how shameful to forget good old Concha!" Di sprang up. "I must go to her."

Ralph opened the door for her, and hesitated there a moment.

"You'll stay and have some breakfast?" The older man did not look at the younger as he gave the invitation; he was intent on lighting his cigar—a delicate operation.


Ralph nodded. He did not trust himself to speak.

And thus they drifted back into the old ways, and Malleson found himself talking as he had talked before, hiding behind a veil of trivial words the scorn and dislike it was not good to show—the contempt to which, for Di's sake, he had forbidden speech.

After this he came as usual, dropping in when his work was done to chat with her or

to take her out. It was wonderfully like old times externally—the times before those unwelcome English visitors had come to disturb their peace. Mr. Ouvry absented himself, and Di preferred to sit at home with her work. Ralph could less often persuade her to walk in the Prado than before, but he knew that he should find her in her corner ready to welcome him. Sometimes she entertained him with accounts of her travels. She spoke of Miss Bell very freely, and gave him a neat little vignette of Madame Lavoisier; even M. Adolphe—seen but once—served to point a tale. But in all these talks no allusion was made to Felix. That young man had disappeared from their horizon, and his friends had no tidings of him; his coming and his going might have been an idle dream, so little did he affect their talk. And so Ralph tried to persuade himself that the old times had come back indeed.

Yet the thought of his cousin haunted him, his name hovered persistently on his lips, but he could not pronounce it. He wanted to bring it in easily and naturally, and all the sentences he framed seemed artificial. He knew he should stammer and hesitate and break down awkwardly, not looking at her, and yet it was her face above all things he wanted to read.



Yet, this unnatural silence could not last between two who were such old and such fast friends. Di had something to say, and one night a chance word of his helped her to say it.

They were chatting of things indifferent, but by-and-by there fell one of those pauses of silence while each dwelt on his own thoughts. When it had lasted a little longer than usual, he said to her, suddenly speaking out what was in his heart—

“Why did you not write to me all these weeks?”

She looked at him, startled; and then she turned to the window. Her profile was towards him, and he could see the sudden quivering of her lips.

“I was thinking of sad things.” She answered him as she had answered Philippa.

He asked no more, but his thoughts were bitter within him.

She was the first to speak again.

“Ralph,” she said, “you remember that Mr. King, whose address you gave me? You said I was to go to him if—if I was in any trouble.”

“I remember.”

“He is dead. I never saw him; but he has left me his money, as I told you in my letter.”

“It was a sensible thing to do,” he said, as she paused again.

"It must have been for love of mamma. I've been thinking what she would like me best to do with it."

"Yes," he forced himself to say.

But she could not go on. She rose and came to him where he leaned against the mantelpiece.

"Oh, Ralph, you understand," she said incoherently, brokenly. "She told me—she said you knew. You will take this money of mine and pay her for me? You will set us free."

For a moment he could not speak. The blood was leaping in indignant throbs through his veins. They had told her, then, they had been base enough to tell her, and this was why she had fled. Oh, what a fool he had been—what a conceited, miserable fool! He did not dare to follow his thoughts further. She was waiting, appealing to him, and her tears were falling on his hand.

"It is all paid," he said gently, "every farthing of it."

CHAPTER XIII.

“What say you to a letter from your friend?
Of much good news?”

THE winter went by, as even the slowest winter will. Everybody said it was a very dull season, and there were some who lamented the absence of Mrs. St. John. Miss Laura Lascelles, whose deputy she had been, was much more strict, and her dances were sedate affairs. “She might almost have passed for an Englishwoman,” said the grumblers.

Major Gibbs, disgusted with the political weather—electrical as before a storm—went off to the German baths to nurse his gout. Thus, as one enemy after another disappeared, people began to forget the hints and rumours and dark sayings that had linked themselves with Mr. Ouvry's name; and that gentleman slipped easily into the old ways, and was, as before, a pillar in the café, and a patron of polite literature in the Athenæum.

Some the report had never reached at all, and others hardly spent a thought on it, or were content with Malleson's curt assurance that the past had been cancelled. After all, the world is very tolerant if you do not defy her to her face. This man had lived among them, bland and blameless, for the best part of a lifetime, and if he were other than he seemed, that was his own affair. It was not too charitable, this little colony of a Saxon race, but it was half pagan in its indifference, in its willingness to take the whited sepulchre for what it professed to be, not curious to pry within. It is with the externals society deals; if these are satisfactory, who cares for the rest? The phenomenon of a man "with a past" was not so uncommon. There were not a few Englishmen in the two Castiles who never cared to cross the Pyrenean snows.

Thus rumour forgot him, and went to hint away some one else's reputation, as was but just, and all the good things of life were restored to him. Di's legacy—no such tremendous fortune—was spent lavishly on him. You would have thought, to see the pains she took, that those short weeks of silence were never to be atoned for.

Once only Felix Chester's name was mentioned.

"Where is that young man?" her father asked.

"I don't know, padre."

She was dusting her little knickknacks, and she paused a minute to give the answer. She never thought of evading the question, or pretending to misunderstand it.

"You sent him away?"

"Yes."

"You must marry some day, my child. You must not think of me."

She threw down her duster at that and came to him.

"Why should I marry? It is best not to think of these things. It is best as it is—just you and me together."

"But that won't last. You must do without the padre some day. He is growing old."

"You know it is forbidden to talk like that." She laid her hand on his lips.

"But one can't forbid the grey hairs."


"You shall dye them," she smiled. "I'll make you have purple hair like Major Gibbs, and I'll wear a flaxen front, with little corkscrew curls, like Miss Piper, and we'll always be young."

But though she laughed, did she for an instant forget the lover whom she had sent

away? Was there an hour of the day when she did not think of him?

Entire silence had fallen between them. She had fled, and he had been content to let her go. Sometimes she wondered what the message was that Ralph had sent her, but she never asked him. She tried conscientiously to think of Felix dancing in stately English ball-rooms with Philippa, and consoling himself with her bright glances; but that was, after all, dismal thinking. It was better to jump up and busy herself with some homely bit of work, such as the washing of the father's pet morsels of china, or the making of a pudding for his dinner.

Sometimes she wandered to the gallery, where the saints and martyrs, the rapt madonnas, live in a hushed, perpetual calm. When she looked at their pictured peace, she felt that love is not everything, that life has other ends. Perhaps Ralph was right. Duty might be more beautiful than happiness, though it wore so unlovely a face. It might be that she was too selfish, too faint-hearted to have found out its charms. She wondered if there was not some helpful work in which she might take a modest share; some of that cheering of the poor and caring for the sick, to which ardent women have in all ages consecrated their lives. What would Miss Barbara have said, if she had guessed that



Di sometimes envied the meek-faced sisters, who stole in and out of the great hospital with modest foot, and looked at her with sidelong glances as she climbed the hill, half ashamed of her idle youth and health and the life in her that would make her step elastic, in spite of her heart, which was sometimes heavy.

She went oftener than before to the great light room where Mrs. Gordon spent her days. The two ladies, who lived remote from society, shook their heads together over the disappointment of their hopes. It was a perpetual subject of talk. Why had the child come back alone, and where was fickle Prince Alasnam? Was it possible that he meant, after all, to lift that flippant, flirting Philippa to the vacant pedestal; that he could be deceived with the glitter of false diamonds, and pass by the true?

Miss Barbara was for asking the girl bluntly, and for warning her solemnly that men were "deceivers ever," and best left out of a woman's life-plans; but Mrs. Gordon would not hear of it. She, too, had been seduced into a willing allegiance by the smiling frankness of the gay young lover, but, failing him, there was another and a worthier. She had a private consolation which she did not impart.

"Let her alone," she said. "How do we know what she may have wished? Perhaps

the true prince is not so very far off, after all."

One day Di, visiting these ladies, announced, with a mischievous face, that she meant to have a tea-party.

"A tea-party!" said Miss Barbara, who had furnished herself with a new cap, and saw here an occasion to wear it, but who held a little contradiction to be wholesome. "What has put that nonsense into your head? Hadn't you enough of gay doings last year?"

"That only gave me a taste for more," said Di saucily.

But this was not to be borne.

"Is that all you've learned with your jaunting about the world——," she was beginning majestically, but Mrs. Gordon interrupted her serenely.

"Why not have your party here, Di, then I should have the benefit."

"And the silver plate all away!" cried Miss Barbara, shifting her point of attack. "Mary Gordon, you're as heedless as a man!"

"The earthenware teapot might do. It would never be noticed under Di's smart new cosy, and it makes better tea."

"No," said Miss Barbara, with much stateliness; "I'll not be put to shame with any of your earthenware. We can get the plate back

for the day if there's a need be. It's but right Deonys should see the teapot that's to be her own one day. And you can watch me manage it, Di. It's not everybody that can make good tea out of it."

"Then it's a bargain, and I'm to give the invitations," Di answered, with a smile of secret enjoyment.

Thus it was settled, and she went about the subtlest part of her scheme, which was nothing less than the extinction of the Piper and Gordon feud.

She came on the night in question, supporting the trembling Miss Piper on her arm. It would task words to tell the persuasions she had used to get her to come at all. The blue satin was not worn on this occasion, but a modest and ancient silk, which could not offend Miss Barbara's prejudices; and the little lady's deportment was meek enough to disarm the most rancorous foe.

Miss Barbara, to do her justice, laid aside open hostilities under her own roof, and did not stint her guest of cream, or water the teapot unduly before filling her cup. Ambassadors Di, seating herself near the tray—furnished with its odd snips of wax-cloth—helped to dispense the sugar, and whispered as she dropped the lumps—

"Miss Piper has a most important matter to consult you about."

"She had better go to some other body," said Miss Barbara, scorning an undertone. "I'm a poor hand at giving advice, especially to folks that never take it."

"But I promise you it will be taken."

"You needn't be so rash with your promises, Deonys; you are not so very ready to be guided as all that comes to."

"Oh, but you must help us. We can't get on at all without you—can we?"

"It would certainly be a great assistance," murmured Miss Piper, apologetic and timid. "An old friend, on whom one could rely—such a delicate commission——"

"If it's anything delicate, as you call it, I'll have nothing to do with it. The Gordons were never good at manœuvring. If there's a wrong to put right, it's a plain word and a blow with them——"

"More often the blow," said Malleeson to himself. He stood outside the circle.

"If it's anything like interfering and encouraging young people in underhand ways or silly love nonsense, you'll find others better at that than me." She levelled her rudest shaft at the conspirators.

"It's a commission from Mrs. St. John," said

Di, who knew that diplomatists needed patience. "She wants a whole shopful of things—fans and gloves, and I don't know all what."

"She would have sent to you, but she feared to be intrusive," Miss Piper struck in eagerly. "As for me, she is aware that my time is not valuable."


"She knows very well I wouldn't encourage her to spend her money on such vanities."

"She means to give the things away, doesn't she? Sugar-plums for the Viennese," said Malleson, lounging up to them. "Come, Miss Barbara, we all know your reputation as a bargainer. The Blue Dahlia lays down his arms the very moment you appear at the door; and as for the Three Roses, he never shows fight at all."

"I would scorn to let myself be cheated as some folks are." She turned on him loftily. "It's you men, with your easy, heedless ways, that spoil the shopkeepers. If they had only women to deal with, they would soon come to reason."

"See what it is to have strength of mind! My tailor charges me a fabulous sum, and when I meekly pay down, regrets he has let me off so cheap."

"That is the way with me, too," said Miss Piper, plucking up a spirit at this similarity of



experience. "And when they tell you the price so courteously, how are you to know it isn't true? It seems so rude to doubt a person's word."

"It's worse to help them to be dishonest"—Miss Barbara spoke severely—"and that's what you do with your soft ways. I wonder you can reconcile it to your consciences."

"It's so difficult," sighed Miss Piper. "And do you really think it is a matter of conscience? I have never considered it in that light."

"It's a matter of getting the things cheap; that's what Mrs. St. John means, if I'm not mistaken," said Malleson, glancing at the list.

"Well, you may let me see the letter. If there's one thing that vexes me more than another, it's to see people wasting their money," said Miss Barbara, giving a grudging permission, whereupon Di rose and walked over to Mrs. Gordon's sofa, and, sitting down at that lady's feet, laughed openly up in her face.

"Di, what a conspirator you have grown!"

"I thought Miss Barbara couldn't resist a passage of arms with the Blue Dahlia," she whispered.

She knew that her mission was ended; the ambadress was triumphant; the cause was won.

But there was something more in the letter

than mere commissions. There was a postscript which Di had not seen, and which, after the manner of postscripts, contained the whole kernel of news. This Miss Piper, with many mysterious words and covert shakings of the head, proceeded to impart as a sign of the newly-sealed truce.

Malleson, watching this by-play with some amusement, presently found himself taken into their councils. Miss Piper's hand shook, and all her flowers and feathers quivered as she handed him the fluttering sheet.

"I always feared she was imprudent, and perhaps too fond of admiration, though so pretty," she said; "but I confess I am disappointed. I thought he was looking in another quarter." She glanced at Di, and then dropped her eyes as if she had exceeded the bounds of modesty by presuming to think at all on so delicate a matter. "Not that I wanted her to marry," she added in a hurry; "I always implore young people to wait."

"It's a pity you couldn't have got that designing creature to take your advice," said Miss Barbara dryly. "I saw through her from the first. Mark my words, she'll never get married at all, let her be engaged a score of times. Give a girl like that one lover, and she'll hanker after twenty, and end by securing none of them.

Men are dull enough, but they've a glimmering of sense left when it comes to the choosing of a wife."

"Pooh!" said Malleson, to whom all this flutter and fuss seemed very like a storm in a teacup. "You make too much of a bit of mere idle gossip; and if it were true——"


"I sadly fear it is true."

"He knows his own mind best, I suppose," said Malleson impatiently.

"And you would leave the poor lad to his fate!" cried Miss Barbara indignantly. "You would see him hoodwinked, and never lift a finger to help him! If I weren't too old"—she glanced at her mild companion drooping over her teacup—"to go gallivanting by myself about the world, I would set out to-morrow and fetch him back. It's the least any true friend of his could do for him."

"If one could be sure that her heart was not in it," said the more sentimental lady.

Malleson turned away impatient and cross. Even the mental picture of Miss Barbara striding across the continent to the rescue of the recalcitrant youth hardly awoke a smile. He was contemptuous over the whisperings and tattle of drawing-rooms that please the women; but all the while he could not forget the letter that had raised this tempest. One or two other



guests came in, and the room began to fill. When everybody was talking, inspired and cheered by the wild music of the reels and strathspeys which Miss Barbara drew from the jingling piano, he retired to a distant window, and read again the thin sheet which he had not relinquished.

“So I hear that Philippa Henshaw and the campaigner—that’s what Mr. St. John calls the mother; he says it’s in some book, Thackeray or something—are in Italy! Wash Bean saw them—he met them in Rome; and that young Englishman, Chester, was dancing around them as usual. They say he’s caught at last. I always thought it was the little one; but, then, you can flatter a man into anything, and I guess she can do with a fortune. I always thought him quite too stiff myself, but then we Americans are different. . . . Mind you get the fans and things cheap. Worth has nearly ruined me, but the costumes are perfectly lovely. The ladies here have no taste anyway; they are as dowdy as Englishwomen. My new silks are all made with a train, etc., etc.”

What had he to do with all this? He crushed the paper in his hand. Was it for him to go and save the moth fluttering round the candle from singeing its wings? If the silly moth mistook the flame of a farthing dip for the sun,

what was that to him? Was he bound with his own hand to destroy the last frail chance to which he clung? He had warned the boy; he had done what he could to save him; but if he would not be saved, what again was that to him? If Felix married this girl, he—well, he would be as happy as most people, as happy as he deserved to be. She was very pretty and perfectly sweet-tempered. Society would envy him and applaud him, and say that he had done excellently. And his higher aspirations, his impulsive desires to play the man and live worthily, would Philippa's smiles foster these?

Ralph pulled himself up suddenly. "It's a lie," he said to himself; "and you know it. You are mean enough to be thinking first of yourself. If you keep silent—you who have some influence over him—and let him drift into this, you think there may be a chance for you. Let him marry and be as wasteful of his life as he likes, so long as there is a chance for you; that is your mean thought, unmasked and stripped." This man dealt hardly with himself, but he loved the truth; he loved it well enough to judge himself by it as well as his neighbour.

He glanced across at Di, who was talking with the English chaplain. The girl's face was serene and sweet. She had found her mission in deeds of kindness to the poor of the little British

community—no great or elaborate work, but enough to keep her nature whole and sound, unsoured by disappointment. She was at the moment discussing soup and flannel with the clergyman, and laughing with him over some of her little experiences. It might seem as if she had put love far enough away from her—a maiden as fancy-free as any Diana—but Malleson knew better. He had not studied her face all these months to misread it now. Suddenly he remembered the letter he had written in answer to Felix's desperate telegrams, that calm, sensible epistle in which he so wisely accounted for her disappearance. Oh, fool that he had been! and he had thought that there was hope for him—

But a drawing-room is hardly the place to bemoan your fate. Society expects you to behave like a Spartan. You must smile all the same, though the fox is gnawing at your vitals. Somebody came and drew this sulky Mr. Malleson from his corner and made him talk. He found himself laughing presently, and complimenting Miss Barbara on her ancient melodies.

Strike up the music—more reels; more wild and barbaric noises, so that we may all be merry and drown thought!

Di was in bright spirits that night, and entertained him all the way home. She was a bit of a mimic, and rehearsed the affair of the truce for

the benefit of this morose Ralph. It was fine to have accomplished her mission. Henceforward the great feud was a thing of the past, to be referred to in the years that were left as "the time when Miss Barbara and I had our little difference, you know;" or, "the winter when that silly body, Amelia Piper, made such a spectacle of herself." Had she not seen the two heads laid very close together, the two caps nodding at each other over the list of Mrs. St. John's wants; and had she not heard all the details of the subtle scheme for laying siege to the Blue Dahlia next morning? "You see, you couldn't do without me," she said, with saucy triumph.

"It's a memorable achievement," he answered, striving after lightness of tone. "You had better mark it as a red-letter day in your diary: 'Suppression of the Gordon riots.'"

"I don't keep a diary now," she answered, with sudden gravity.

"Since when did you give up that virtuous habit? I must look into this matter. Nineteen, and without a diary to confide in! There must be something seriously amiss."

"One must cease to be foolish some time," she said turning away her head.

"Don't grow too wise before the time, child,"—he smiled at her rather sadly—"that will

come soon enough. When did you give up your journal?"

"In England—before I went to Germany."

It was the answer he expected.

"Why?" he continued urgently.

"Because"—she spoke with an effort—"when one has nothing but sad things to write about, when one is not very happy, it is best to be quiet."

"So it has come," he said half to himself. She too has learned her lesson of silence. In face of life's real troubles who cares to be garrulous? "Letts's Scribbling Diary" holds no very deep secrets of the human heart, I take it: the anguish that is bitter to bear is never expressed in well-turned phrases.

His heart ached for her, ached the more that she took her troubles so bravely and with a smiling face.

She pulled him in when he would have left her at the door. She was almost cruel in her kindness.

"Come and see the father," she called to him, flying lightly up the steps and into the sitting-room, but no Mr. Ouvry was there. The lamp burned low, but on the table, seen clearly in the half darkness, was a little patch of white.

"More letters!" she cried. "What a night of news!"

He screwed up the lamp, and she opened the first envelope.

"It's from Madame Lavoisier," she said. "Wait, Ralph, and I'll read it to you."

Madame's letters always amused her. They were full of sprightly details and pictures of life in the gayest capital in the world. M. Adolphe, of whom she had heard so much, figured largely in them. His name was not less frequent in this, but the tone was dismal throughout.

"Figure to yourself my despair," wrote madame. "Just when I hoped that our dear Bell was becoming human, that she possessed a heart open to tenderness, there arrives a whole Scotch family—father, mother, brother, sister. Excellent people, no doubt; but with what an accent, what an absence of grace! We are inseparable; we breakfast together *en famille*, we dine, we sup, we go to see the sights. I am inconsolable, and my poor Adolphe despairs. I tremble for him; I quiver every time the bell rings. He is capable of throwing himself into the Seine. To-morrow we shall be ordered back to Scotland. I cry when I am alone over the destruction of all my hopes."

Heartless Miss Di burst into an inextinguishable laughter over this epistle.

"You don't think of M. Adolphe tearing his hair as he hovers on the brink," said Malleson, reproachfully.

"He won't drown himself; he'll wait till the water is warmer, and by that time he will have consoled himself with a French girl. That's the way, isn't it?" she said saucily.

As she replaced the sheet, a second little note fluttered out of the envelope.

"Now for Bell's view of the case," she said.

Miss Bell's sentiments were characteristic. She went straight to the point. No graceful drapery of description, no reflection here.

"I ought to tell you that I have felt for some time that you were right to go back to your father. I have seen something of family life lately, and I can enter more into your feelings now. After all, one's own people should come first. The Hendersons joined us in this hotel last week, and we have been much together; Sarah Henderson is so sensible, and she can do almost anything. Ned, that is her brother, is *much improved*; it is beautiful to see his behaviour to his mother. I wish you had known the Hendersons; you would have understood what good grounds I have for appreciating Scotch character. The French are a sadly light-minded nation; even madame, who is Scotch by birth, has caught something of their frivolous manner. Mr. Henderson, who knows her, thinks her *much altered*. He considers her rather a dangerous person, and wishes to be as little with her as possible. I shall

manner; but it is a pity she gives one a wrong impression. Ned Henderson has just come to ask me to go with him and Sarah to the Louvre, so I must close this letter."

"So Miss Bell has met her fate," said Malleson, with a laugh. "Oh, you women, what mischief you work in the world!"

Di did not laugh this time. She let the note drop carelessly from her fingers. She was thinking—"that is the Ned Henderson Mr. Chester used to talk about, who went shooting with him in the north."

Malleson had picked up his hat and was saying good-bye, and something about perhaps not seeing her again for a little time—a sudden journey had called him off at a moment's notice. He spoke rather incoherently; he did not look at her. She gave him her hand mechanically, hardly listening to him.

"A journey?" she said. "Oh, come back soon."

He stooped and kissed her hand.

"For good luck," he said, in an odd voice, going off at a great pace.

She looked after him absently. Her mind was full of one thought.

"Bell will see this friend of his every day, and they will talk about him; and I am not there to hear them."


CHAPTER XIV.

“What news on the Rialto?
Who is he comes here?”

IT was in Venice that he found them at last— Venice which he had prayed never more to see. His thoughts were bitter within him as he tossed his portmanteau into a gondola, and with a swift stroke or two was carried out upon the shining path. Venice, queen of the seas, was not less fair than when he had seen her last in his hot youth. He had thought her cruel then, because she smiled upon his gloom ; he was older now, and he did not expect Mother Nature to work miracles—to mourn and lament with you and to laugh at the same instant because it pleases me to be glad. Was Venice to blame, because his second coming was destined to be as joyless as his first? Here, long ago, he had fought his battle, and had retired wounded and, as he supposed, at an end of all fighting for the rest of a maimed and ignoble life.

"History repeats itself," he exclaimed, and he laughed aloud rather bitterly. The gondolier, bending to his task, glanced at him, but not in wonder. Nothing that these strange English did could surprise him. He knew them all and their ways. It was his experience, often repeated, that they preserved a solemn gloom when everybody else was grinning, and only relaxed when not a hint of pleasantry was in the air. They were exclusive even in their smiles, these cold, proud Britons.

All unconscious of the character that was being given him, Malleson landed at his hotel and proceeded to order dinner. He was past the age when bitter feelings take away the appetite. He ate and drank and noticed all the little changes in the arrangements and the furniture that had taken place since last he had stayed in the same house. From the window of his room he looked upon a dark and dismal reach of greenish water, where the afternoon shadows fell earliest; these sluggish side-paths have little that is picturesque about them. He remembered that he was leaning on this balcony, or its fellow, one night in that time long ago; he was fresh from Oxford, full of dreams and enthusiasms, and the meanest gondola laden with market produce gliding slowly over the sombre strip of water was a wonder to him.



Then Roderick burst in with a wild air and a white terrified face; and good-bye from that moment to dreams and visions.

Well, it was folly to dwell on these things; it was treason to the past and to poor old Rod, whose grave was green. We are unfaithful enough, Heaven knows, to those who still journey with us, but we have, most of us, this grace of loyalty to the dead. It was better to dress and go out, and to pluck up a heart for the last struggle.

He chose the hour when everybody was sure to be abroad, to see and be seen in the great square, where life marches evenly to music.

Spring had already come to this sea-city, and the mild glory of the sunset touched the placid waters with a faint red flush. Far off on the distant lagoons water and sky met, and strange new lands and seas, unmapped by any geographer, sprang into sudden existence. San Giorgio, set against that daffodil and rose, was surely never raised by human hands—it was a wonder, a dream; the slender shaft of the campanile looked as if a breath would sway it.

Venice was thinking of quite other things as it sauntered and beat time to the band. It loves its frivolity; it is only the English papas and mammas with many fair-haired daughters who are not frivolous. These stared up at the great

horses, trying inwardly to think St. Mark as beautiful as all persons of good taste pronounce it to be. The young people cared more, perhaps, for the pigeons, or for the puppets who strike the hours with unwearied spirit ; most of all, of course, for the shops.

The café Florian was driving a brisk trade, and at all the little tables people were sipping ices ; the piazza was black with moving figures, careless of the rare golden light. Malleson made his way slowly through the throng, gay as people only are in Venice. All at once he saw Philippa. She, too, was looking up at the proud, prancing horses, but her eyes were absent and vague in their glance. He stopped and examined her with jealous criticism. Yes, she was beautiful—beautiful enough to steal the heart out of a man and then to laugh at him for his folly. Among the many faces there was none so fair as hers.

Was Felix watching her, too, from some corner of the great square, and would he come presently to pour out his confidences—rhapsodies, the same old raptures in praise of a new goddess ? Malleson wondered suddenly why he had journeyed to Venice. Was it only to find out that Philippa was more beautiful than ever ?

While he stood, she turned her head slowly, and he knew that she saw and recognized him.

The colour, always so quick to come with every light emotion, rose under her fair transparent skin ; her very throat seemed to crimson. She hesitated just an instant ; perhaps the scarcely-veiled contempt in his eyes frightened her. Then she got up and came to him. She held out her hand, but he did not take it, and she let it drop suddenly at her side.

“ I expected you,” she said.

“ You wanted me to be a witness of your triumph ?” He could not help the sneer.

“ Then you have heard ?” She looked at him with a sort of proud surprise overcoming her shame.

“ I have heard nothing ; but I am prepared not to be astonished. I have come a long way to hear your news—haven't I ?”

“ To congratulate me, or some one else on his escape, perhaps ?” she said. “ Don't trouble to explain ; I know why you came.”

“ Then I may as well return.”

She gave a little impatient movement.

“ We can't talk here,” she said, turning away and making him a sign to follow her.

He obeyed, not understanding this new mood. He had expected to be met with blushes, laughter, perhaps a little ashamed feeling, and he noticed that the crowd parted before this regal maiden, who bore herself with strange

haughtiness. He had a mind to turn and go, but he followed her.

She parted the heavy leather curtain, and entered the cathedral. Here, after the golden light of the piazza, the shadows seemed to fall thick. The air was faint with incense, the great candles burned feebly on the altar, and the glory of the mosaics was hidden. Everybody was out on the square. The music reached them now and again, invading the silence of the dim church.

"You can't scold me here," she said with a little smile, in which the old Philippa peeped out.

"I have no wish to scold you," he said coldly.

"I am too insignificant even for your anger."

"This is all beside the point. Where is he?" he asked. He was growing every moment more bewildered. He looked about him as if he expected Felix to emerge from behind one of the pillars and confront him. He made up his mind that he had come on a fool's errand, and that the more quickly he went the better.

"Do you mean Felix Chester?"

He did not deign a reply, and she added quickly—

"I sent him away three days ago."

"You sent him away!" he exclaimed, roused at last to anger, "you taught him to be fickle

to the best emotion of his life, and then you tired of him and sent him away! Oh, you women, how cruel you can be!"

"He never even paid me the poor compliment of pretending to like my society," she said proudly. "He hasn't been such a delightful companion all these months. It was not for my sake he stayed," she added, with bitter frankness.

"And yet, knowing what you did, you let him stay!"

"How was I to hinder him living where he chose?" she begun impetuously, and then she hesitated. "There were some things that, if I had known them, might have made a difference. But I did not know."

"You did not wish to know," he corrected her quietly.

"Well, then, I did not wish to know, if you will have it so."

Her eyes fell before his; he seemed able to read her very soul.

"Was it such a wonder that I did not care to court shame and disgrace——"

"Be good enough to tell me about Felix," he said curtly. "Where can I find him?"

"I told you he had left Venice."

She suffered keenly; perhaps for the first time in her life she fully understood in all its clearness the contempt of an honourable, truth-

loving nature for what is mean and base. His calm ignoring of her suffering scorched her like a hot breath.

"You were always hard and unjust to me," she said, stung to momentary passion.

"How could I be other than hard?" he answered her quietly. "Think of it—you have embittered two lives—you have inflicted sorrow on the gentlest heart in the world; you have been false to friendship. A word from you might have hindered it all, but your wounded pride and vanity suffered and you kept silence. This is how you have repaid her love and trust; and you tell me I am unjust to you!"

Her head drooped on her breast, her cheek blanched. All her gay, careless life had not held a moment like this. In those few words, spoken so quietly, she saw, as it were, her own soul laid bare. She stood at last face to face with the naked, unvarnished truth; her poor pretences, her flimsy excuses stripped away. He never knew how much she suffered in that brief minute of time; but there was some seed of nobleness in her after all, on which he had not calculated. It sprang up now in response to his words.

"I deserve it all," she said; "it is all true." Then, in her need of the relief of confession, she hurried on. "Nothing that you say or think

is too bad for me. Perhaps if I had had some one like you near me when I was young I might have been different. I do not know, and it does not matter now——”

“Tell me nothing more; except where I may find him,” he said, quick to be generous too.

“No. I will tell you everything now. I guessed that mamma knew something about Mr. Ouvry, and that she used her knowledge to send Di away—out of England. I do not defend her, but it was for my sake—my supposed happiness she did it. I did not seek to know what it was; I might have been told if I had asked, but I did not ask. I wished to keep clear of it all. One day I met Di, and she told me she was leaving England. She told me where she was going; I was the only one who knew. Miss Fullarton, for some reason of her own, played into my hands; she made a mystery of their journey and their destination, and when Mr. Chester came back they had vanished.”

“And you kept silence,” said Malleson. He was leaning against a pillar with folded arms, listening quietly.

“I did not tell him. One day I meant to do it, but he was cold and bitter, and I shut my mouth. He was often very rude,” she said, with a faint gleam of a smile; “and I was

angry. It made me angry to see how forbearing and kind mamma was, and how she bore with all his crossness, and I would not help him. After we came to Italy, he made no effort to find Di out. He knew, I dare say, as we all did, that she had gone back to her father; but he never spoke of returning to Madrid. He had come to believe that he was mistaken—that she never cared for him. He told me once of a letter you had written to him, and he said that, after all, you might be right.”

“I believed at the time what I wrote,” he said quickly, feeling that he, too, had not been wholly blameless. “I have since had reason to know that I was mistaken.”

“I knew all along that he was wronging her,” said Philippa, still with that strange, calm frankness with which she had made the rest of her confession. “I am showing you my whole self now—am I not? I knew that he would never let any stain on her father’s name stand between him and his love; but he had made me suffer some things, and that was how I punished him. One day, not long ago, mamma let drop something—a mere hint—and then, with a question or two, it all came out. I can hardly tell you what changed me. I think it was the thought of you,” she said, with a shade of bitterness; “and the certainty that you would

one day find me out ; but I went straight to him and told him."

"You told him everything?"

"I spared mamma where I could—" her cheeks burned hot with sudden shame—"but he knows it all. He is better than I took him to be. He was very gentle and forbearing. I think these months have made a man of him. He is almost good enough for Di."

"Thank heaven, we have got to the truth at last!" said Malleson, rousing himself with a great sigh. He was not thinking of her. She looked at him for a moment with strange wistfulness.

"Tell me one thing," she said. "It is not too late?"

"No, it is not too late."

"And she will not let any—any scruple come between them?"

"They love each other. They have done nothing dishonourable; they have borne their share of others sins, and now—who shall forbid them to be happy?"

He spoke half absently, and he looked weary and worn. He was visited by a great depression. He had nerved himself for a struggle, and the battle had been fought and won without him; not even the poor pleasure of restoring with his own hand her lost happiness

had been left him to do for Di. It was done, and he could but stand aside and look on.

"And you—what are you going to do?" he said suddenly, remembering her and looking at her with something like compunction. She, too, had staked her all and had lost; in this, at least, they were alike. He was angry no longer. Who would take a hammer to crush a butterfly?

"Who—I?" she said listlessly. "Oh, I am going to be married."

"Going to be married!" he echoed. He thought he had come to an end of all surprises, and here was a new and astonishing turn given to affairs.

"Yes. Is that so surprising? It is the goal I have been taught to look to all my life, since I left the nursery. There is some one who is willing to take me in spite of all that people are kind enough to say against me."

He took a step forward; he looked at her earnestly. Even so poor and weak a creature was worth saving, if he could save her.

"You are not doing this thing because of the idle tattle of——"

"I am doing it for a great many reasons."

"There is only one reason that can justify such a step."

"Ah, to you, perhaps. But I am not like you."

"Don't deceive yourself," he said. "Don't make a further tangle of your life. There can never be any good ground for that."

"I told you I was doing it for a great many reasons"—she coloured and hesitated—"and just a little, perhaps, for love. You know it does not take very much to make me happy." It seemed as if in his presence she was compelled to recognize the limitations of her nature. "You need not be afraid for me, though I thank you that you still care enough to warn me."

"And who is the happy man?" he asked coolly. He thought he saw now through the mystery of Felix's dismissal (though in this he wronged her), and his little spring of interest died out. Truly, it was easy to be just and to make amends when it cost nothing.

"If you had not been in such a hurry to crush me, you might have seen him with mamma at the café."

She spoke with something like the old ease and lightness. True to her nature, she fled instinctively from things unpleasant. She longed to forget the past hour, and, if possible, to make him forget it too.

"Mamma likes him very much. They were fixing on the furniture when I left—it's a subject they are fond of discussing."

"I did not see your mother."

"I know that; you only saw me. I felt your look burning me, and I knew that my hour had come."

"When is it to be?" He could not imitate her lightness.

"My marriage? Oh, one of these days, very soon; men are impatient creatures. He is older than I am, which everybody says is an excellent arrangement. He is very good," she said more gently; "too good for me, and he has wisdom enough for us both." She was silent a moment, then she added, with a visible effort, "I have told him everything."

"It is best to begin with the truth."

He was marvelling inwardly how this new aspirant had borne the history. In spite of the proof she had just given him, he was inclined to doubt the honesty or the fulness of the confession.

"Di will be very glad to hear of your happiness," he said calmly. "Have you any message to send her?"

She shook her head.

"I don't deserve to send her any. Tell her to remember me sometimes—as I used to be. And you will give her this for me?" She took off her glove and drew a slender silver ring from her finger. "Mr. Chester gave it to me

that day of the fair, but I know he did not buy it for me."

He took it in silence. Was he always to be the messenger of another, always to plead some other cause rather than his own? Then he remembered that, though trains will not hasten even for the most ardent of lovers, Felix would reach Madrid long before him.

"I'll take care of it," he said, slipping it into his waistcoat pocket.

While they talked with hushed voices one or two people had come in. A priest was busy at the distant altar; lights sprang up, and gleams of gold and of rich colour flashed into life from the walls.

"I must go," said Philippa. "They will have furnished all the reception rooms by this time, and will begin to miss me."

"I will take you back to the café."

"Will you come and see mamma?"

"No," he said quickly. He felt that this was more than he could endure. "You must excuse me; I am leaving Venice at once."

"You return so soon?"

"I must go back to my work."

"And to Di;" she will not be content till you have shared her happiness. She has been well off in some of her friendships."

"Good fortune has come to you, too, it would

seem," he said, with a smile. After all he could not part unkindly from her. He was never likely to see her again, and he remembered many pleasant hours with her in old days when he had believed her to be artless and simple; many a smile at her bright audacity, many a moment when her beauty and her charms had pleased him well. For these past favours he was ready to cry quits with her now.

"With my 'Soldier of fortune.' Did I tell you he is a soldier?"

"And a conqueror or conquered—which is it?"

"I suppose it is I who am a little the slave this time." She lifted her eyebrows with a whimsical look. "It's a punishment for all my sins, I suppose. Good-bye," she said, and this time he did not refuse her hand. "You have been very good to me. I shall never forget it."

He never had known, he never would know, how much she had always wished to stand well in his esteem. Her April face was grave for the moment; but he carried away the impression of a brilliant smile.

"She always took life easily," he thought to himself; and for the duration of a breath he felt inclined to envy her. Life was not easy then for him.

He had gone with her till within a few paces

of the place where her friends sat. Glancing over the heads of the crowd, he saw Mrs. Henshaw's nodding purple feathers adding emphasis to her speech. The ice was melting on her plate; she was tapping with her fan the arm of her companion. He was not destined even to catch a glimpse of the estimable military gentleman who was Philippa's conqueror; the lady's flounces hid him effectually. Now she turned and saw her daughter; and instinctively he fled, not pausing till he had put the length of the piazza between them.

He wandered aimlessly through the narrow, crowded streets of the city, dark and unsavoury at the best of times; the people jostled him, for he paid little heed to the rules of the road. He was marvelling over that old subject on which our philosophers have thrown little light—the various fates that are dealt out to each of us, not surely according to our deserts. Here was a lady, here were two ladies—mother and child—who had not aspired to any clear heights of morality; who had, to speak the plain truth, done many a mean, ignoble, unworthy deed, yet fortune had showered good things on them, and made their path plain.

He thought of Philippa sailing her galley on fair seas unruffled by any storm, reaching prosperously the haven of her desires, and—yes, in

spite of that one glimpse into her soul—thinking it but her due that life should smile on her.


Did he envy her now? Here, in Venice, of all places, he might surely have been allowed to make his moan and bewail his hard lot; yet I question if, after that one short regret, he would have changed places with the happiest and most prosperous man in the sea-city.

“Entsagen,” “entbehren”—there is sweetness to be wrung even out of that bitter cup.

By-and-by, without intending it, he came out upon a quay where the gondoliers wait to be hired, and a wayward fancy to reach the silence of the distant lagoons took hold of him. He stepped into a boat, and gave the order to go out to where the waters broaden into a sea, and Venice is lost in the distance.

“Go on,” he cried, impatient to leave all life and sound behind, and the boatman obeyed. It was but another freak of an eccentric Britain; and the Britains, it is well known, pay handsomely.

They were far enough away at last. Venice was wrapped in a soft haze, which its lights hardly penetrated. The night was grey and mild, and everything seemed to sleep: the brooding sky hung like a curtain over the earth; there was drowsiness in the lap of the water



against the boat, and the very stars were too indolent to shine.

Quietness and peace came to him, too, at last. He lay and looked up at the bending grey sky. He had meant to do a great thing for Di, and it had all been done without him. Already, perhaps, she was happy with her lover, and he was going home to wish her joy. There was only one thing more he could do—the last for her. He could bury his own secret for ever, bury it a hundred fathoms deep, and be the friend they took him for.

He sat up suddenly, to the surprise of the gondolier, who thought that he slept, and who had entertained furtive plans of stealing homewards.

“Go back to Venice. Quick!” he cried.


CHAPTER XV.

“Après tant de jours; après tant de pleurs.”

“Beautiful lady, I love you better than all the diamonds and all the riches of the world.”

HE knew he should get over it—put it behind him. In this life of ours death comes to us all many times; he had died before, and it had been harder then. Something had passed out of his existence, but other things were left—things that it might be worth one's while to live for. He even discovered with uneasy astonishment, and something like self-reproach, that his trouble did not exclude every other feeling. He noticed, for instance, that his room had not been brushed or dusted since he left it; and he felt it to be a great aggravation of his misery that he had come back with a heavy feverish cold.

This alternate shivering and burning made the work that was to be his solace impossible. He threw down his pen in disgust and resigned himself to idleness. It was hard usage; wasn't



it enough that he had effaced himself, taken to himself that hard doctrine of renunciation? Why should fate add a throbbing head to her other insults?

He sat cowering over the fire, thinking chiefly, it must be confessed, of his bodily ailments. One is not always on the heights; where is your philosopher who could endure the toothache patiently? A man with a cold or a headache is a terror to most households; and I question whether the happiest turn to his love affairs could console him at such a time, or make him deem himself other than an object of deep pity.

To this sufferer—one moment bemoaning his barren life, the next his burning head—there entered presently a beautiful young lady. Malle-son, glancing up, thought it was but one more delusive dream, such as he had awaked from many times when he had pictured Di presiding here; transforming the “outer court” into the “inner sanctuary,” the dusty, shabby room into home.

“Why do you come?” he said half aloud.
“You do not belong to me any more.”

“May I come in, Ralph?” said the real Di, coming forward, not waiting for permission.
“I have brought Concha. We heard that you had come back, and I wanted to——”

What was it? To thank him? to share some good news with him?

"Oh, but you are ill, surely!" she broke off abruptly.

"Just ill enough to be glad to forget it, and to thank you for coming to cheer me."

"Anchel said nothing about that—did he, Concha? He only told us you had come back."

"He thinks there are no bones ache but his own," said the old woman, seating herself heavily.

"He reserves for himself the privilege of grumbling," said Malleon, jumping up and dragging forward a chair for Di. "He thinks I ought to be gratified to be let off with a cold."

"He is a selfish old man; and you want somebody to scold you both," she said, looking at him with a serious air. "As for you, why did you run away from us all?"

She did not wait for his answer; there was a new soft light upon her face, and she was smiling instead of scolding.

The old serving woman had risen from her seat, and, placing her basket on the floor, she began to push about the furniture.

"A man's a poor creature at all times," she muttered; "and when he is ill—— Blessed

saints! he would let the world fall to pieces and never put out a finger to stop it. Will the señorita behold the condition of this room?"

"I'll help you," cried Di, springing up. "You may well talk, Concha. Was there ever such an untidy boy? The chairs look as if they had been dancing a reel; no wonder he has a headache."

Ralph lay back in his seat and watched her with a smile on his lips. He had been wretched and lonely, averse from work, tired of everything, and this sweet friend had come to cheer him. Could he not accept her friendship and be thankful for the boon?

"I suppose I mustn't touch the precious papers?" she was saying, looking with great respect at the disorderly writing-table. "The dust is sacred; but if you only knew how thick it is!"

"Sweep them all into the basket," he said, rising and helping her. "I'll begin afresh—another day. It is time for a new beginning."

"All that wisdom lost to the world!" she said with dismay, as he crushed the manuscript ruthlessly between his hands.

"Don't be sarcastic," he retorted; "you may leave that to me. A man with a cold has a good ground of quarrel with the world."

"The world is beautiful," she answered, turning away. "Why should you quarrel with it? Don't you know that the spring has come?"

"Your spring—yes."

Perhaps she did not hear him. She was looking out of the window. The house was in welcome shadow, but the opposite pavement was barred with sunshine. The old earth had revived and was gay and wanton in its youth, for spring, as she had said, was at hand.

Concha, with much show of zeal, was producing order out of chaos, impartially mingling addresses to the blessed saints with maledictions on Anchel's rheumatic bones. The others did not speak, and Ralph, looking up, saw that Di had forgotten him.

She roused herself presently and came behind him, putting a hand on the back of his chair.

"Why did you go away, Ralph?" she said, speaking very low.

"Why did I go?" he repeated. "In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of travel. I think it was to bring you a message from a young lady."

"Tell me," she said urgently. "You went to Venice?"

"To Venice—yes. But Prince Alasnam had set out on a journey days before, so the envoy had to take himself home again."

"You brought a message—from Philippa," she faltered.

"This," he said, and he held up the ring. She was still hidden behind him, and she put out her hand and took it silently.

"Tell me about her," she whispered by-and-by.

"She is going to be married," said Ralph, smiling oddly to himself. "I think we may believe it this time. Mrs. Henshaw was arrayed in the purple plumes and she had on a new gown, and if ever a gown expressed triumph in every line and fold of it, that one did."

"She is married by this time," Di said in a low voice. "It was to be yesterday."

"So? Wise man to brook no delay!"

"I got another message." Her heart was swelling, she could hardly speak. He had gone then to Venice—all this long way for her!

"I know, and I think I can guess who the messenger was," he said calmly, helping her.

"Was it wrong to listen? Tell me, Ralph. I don't know if I was right, but it seemed to me it might be still more wrong to——"

"To play the maiden of fiction and make

everybody wretched with your heroics? Nay, my dear, we have martyrs enough without your taking up the *rôle*. It would suit you but ill, besides."

"I could give up, too, if it were best," she said, with a touch of pain.

"And turn Prince Alasnam over to me? Thank you, but I've had enough of the young man; I wash my hands of him from to-day. Did he never bring you a message from me?"


"I went away. What was it, Ralph?"

"It would seem it is not needed now." He smiled. "Your instinct and my logic have arrived at the same conclusion, Di. We are both foolish creatures; and Prince Alasnam, who has done nothing to deserve it, has got the better of us both."

"If I thought you were pleased——" she began, much moved.

"Pleased!" he said, and he smiled once more. "Am I never again to be privileged with a sight of your face, Miss Di? What have I done that you should persistently address all your remarks to the back of my head? Come here, and let me look at you."

She came round at that and knelt down beside him.



Concha, thumping the sofa cushions with savage energy, looked at her young mistress in amazement. Was it not enough that one young gentleman should spend all his waking hours in the Preciados; must the señorita run after this old and ugly Mr. Malleson too? It was well she had faithful Concha to trudge behind her, and not that feather-brained Pepa, who was, doubtless, at this moment lolling over the balcony, while the puchero was burnt to a cinder.

"Señorita," she cried, as she conjured up this mental picture, "it is time to go home. Don Carlos will be impatient for his coffee."

But Deonys waved her away with an impatient movement of her hand. Even the father was forgotten at that moment. She looked up at Ralph with appealing eyes, the colour coming and going with every breath.

"Oh, Ralph," she said, "you have always been the dearest friend and brother to him and to me; what should we both have done without you? And you are a little bit glad, aren't you—not very sorry, at least? Indeed, I couldn't help it——"

"God bless you, Di," he said very gently, laying his hand for an instant on her bent head. "Don't you know, child, I've always thought of

your happiness first?" He could say it honestly now.

"He is too good for me, I know." She had turned away her face and was looking absently in front of her; already her thoughts had gone back to her lover. There was a proud smile on her lips. "He is too good for me, but——"

"But I shouldn't tell him that, I think. Most likely he'll believe it; there's no limit to the conceit of some young fellows. Wholesome snubbing is what I should recommend."

"I shouldn't know how to begin," she answered, laughing in her happiness. She was no longer afraid that he might think her unworthy of so great a prize.

"Not after practising on me all these years?"

"Did I snub you?" she said, taking the accusation very lightly. "But then you never thought so much of me. He puts me on a pedestal; some day I shall come tumbling down, and then he will be dreadfully disappointed."

"Prince Alasnam has found the lady who is better than diamonds," said Malleson half to himself. "The riddle of the white satin is read; the ninth statute has been discovered at last."

"What nonsense you are talking, you silly

boy!" she said, jumping up and tying on her hat. "Yes, Concha, I am coming. Better than diamonds! If you talk to him like that, I'll forbid him to come to you. And why, if you please, do you always call him Prince Alasnam? His own name is prettier." She blushed rosily.

"Ask him," said Malleson, dragging his chair nearer the fire. "If he doesn't know, tell him from me to read the story and lay it to heart."

"He is coming to see you," she said, pausing at the door. "I think you had better tell him yourself."

"So he is coming to see me! Does he want my opinion too?"

"He would have come with me, but I wanted to tell you first. We are all coming every day—the padre too, and Concha with her duster—till you get well again."

"What a threat!" he said, with a shudder. "If anything could cure a man surely that would."

But he sent her away with a smile, and only grew grave again when the sound of her light, quick footsteps had died off upon the stair.

"I've done it," he said to himself, with a kind of grim humour; "and she never suspects. Ralph Malleson, what an actor the world has

lost in you! Now for the boy!" He drew himself together and took a great breath. "It won't be so bad the next time, and the time after less bad still, and finally not bad at all. It's the first step that costs."


Almost while he thought aloud Felix came flying up the stairs, but stopped half-way to greet a lady who was coming down.

"I'm late," he said with the voice of compunction; "but it was your father who kept me. It was business, dear one, about our home. He is glad we should settle in England; and some day, he says, he will come to us there——"

"In England? Ah, yes, you will tell me all about that another time. And now, won't you go to Ralph? He is ill, and a little lonely." She looked at him appealingly. "It seems hard that we should have all the happiness," she said.

"I'll go to him. You will wait for me just five minutes more? I can hardly believe in my good fortune till I've shared it with him, dear old man."

She sent away Concha—whose patience was worn to a thread—and waited for him alone. There was a wide window with a low, broad sill, on which she seated herself. No one came or went to disturb her silence; but outside there




was life and movement of passing crowds made happy by the new birth of the world. Another king had come to the land, and the troubles of a year ago were already all forgotten. Di looked out and smiled gravely to herself. After some days of wintry darkness her spring had come back too. Henceforward she also was to walk under bright skies, with a glad heart among her fellows, helping where she could ; remembering to spare out of her undeserved store something for another's need. She turned the silver ring thoughtfully on her finger. It was a token of ended estrangement—ended pain ; now at last she was at peace with all the world.

By-and-by Felix came and sat beside her. He was quieter, and his mobile face graver than it often was. He took her two hands in his own before he spoke. Then suddenly he said impetuously—

“What a good fellow he is—the best fellow in the world! And I used to be such a little brute to him long ago!”

She looked up at him and smiled.

“Is that what you were thinking of? Ralph was always the dearest of friends. He thinks so much about others, and what will make them happy. He never thinks of himself at all. That is what we must try to do.”



"I've always been horribly selfish, I'm afraid, but now——" he looked into her clear, steadfast eyes—"but now you will help me?"

"We will help each other," she said as she rose.

They went slowly downwards, and Ralph, standing at his high window saw them pass out into the sunshine.

THE END.

SURRENDER.

A NOVEL.

BY LESLIE KEITH.

LONDON: SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE & RIVINGTON.

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"In days when trashy novels are perhaps more the rule than ever, it is refreshing to come across such an unpretending, admirably told, and yet really interesting, story as 'Surrender.' We have nothing but praise for the two volumes in which what may be called a chapter out of the history of Joyce Daring's life is begun, continued, and ended. It is a very important chapter, however, though the period intervening between the day on which the possibility of surrendering dawned upon Joyce, and the day on which the surrender was consummated, is comparatively brief. We shall not, of course, spoil the interest for the reader. But it may be observed that the book deserves to be recommended, notwithstanding the fact that the heroine is by no means a perfect specimen of her sex. She is, indeed, in some respects absolutely unattractive. On the other hand, she has the high merit of being different from the ordinary creations of the novelist. She is not endowed with irresistible beauty, and she talks and acts differently from the young ladies one usually meets with—in fiction. Withal, she has many virtues which cannot fail to command admiration. Her independence, her truthfulness, her uprightness, and her sense of honour—which many will think is too fine—justify the affection which is obviously entertained by the author for her. But we confess we like better than Joyce Daring the two orphan sisters, who, possessing as much independence as Joyce, and whose good qualities are as numerous, cheerfully work for a living—and succeed in getting it. Bab and Freda Dewhurst—Bab especially—are charming girls, and all Bab's untidiness will not, we believe, prevent her from being the favourite with at least the male readers of the book. It is quite clear that the author has no sympathy with the people who hold that women are as able to walk alone in the world as men; but her satire will be excused by those who differ from her. She certainly leaves Bab in good hands. Colonel Loveday, the hero of the story, is a very excellent kind of person, but we are not sure, even when we come to the final episode, that he was altogether cut out for the heroine. No exception can, however, be taken to any of his actions. There is only a want of originality about him which we should scarcely have expected from the author—'Charlie' will probably be generally voted the better fellow of the two. There are minor characters which have been painted with care and success, notably Justin, the selfish and unprincipled brother, who does not care what happens to any one so long as he has money in his pocket; and the delicious little old maid, Miss

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Felicia, who kept her secret locked in her own heart and behaved like the English gentlewoman she was. From first to last, 'Surrender' is fresh and bright, and the absence of sensational elements of every kind is certainly not a drawback. The refined tone which pervades the novel, and the excellent, though simple, language in which it is written, are worthy of special recognition. We shall be very glad to have another new book by the same author for review."—*Figaro*, October, 1881.

"So far as we are aware, there has been no particular notice taken of a novel by Leslie Keith, named 'Surrender.' Yet in these two unpretentious little volumes we find more natural talent, right feeling, and good drawing of character than in nine-tenths of the novels that issue each season from the press. The 'Surrender' is that made to happiness by a young girl, who is one of a family with which she has little natural affinity. Joyce Daring is amongst her relatives without being of them, a phenomenon to be observed in almost every domestic community. The others—her mother and her pretty sister, and her artist brother—are more fascinating members of society than Joyce. They are agreeably constituted without much disturbing conscience, and can therefore pass easily through life, worrying themselves not at all about responsibility, and very little about principle. Joyce is born independent, just, and upright. She will dash herself against impossible heights of honour; and her ideas of honesty are perpetually clashing with those of her handsome brother Justin, who takes money wherever he can get it; or her sweet mother, who thinks it so unfair to be asked to pay 'for things that we've had, don't you know.' The story is well told, with much sympathy and little exaggeration. We are not going to inform our readers how Colonel Loveday brought the stubborn Joyce to 'Surrender.' This estimable military gentleman is himself the weak part of the work. To marry on your death-bed and then recover, is at any time excessively weak. But we have noticed that, just as his particular rank seems to have an over-mastering fascination for feminine novel-writers, so there appears to be tremendous difficulty in bringing him out strong. Colonel Loveday has not been brought out strong. On her way through the story of Joyce Daring's conquest, the author finds opportunity for some friendly satire on high art devotees and the leaders of the advanced women party. It is not overdone. It is not the views, but the exaggerations she satirizes. Two of her best characters—Bab and Freda Dewhurst, young orphan sisters—live and work by themselves in the most independent and unconventional manner. One of them, indeed, subsides into matrimony; but the other, the prettiest and most attractive, who has taken art as her helpmate through life, remains singularly faithful to her vows, and declines to add any to them of a more human and ordinary kind."—*Daily News*, August 20, 1881.

"'Surrender' is a pleasant tale. The characters are drawn with some skill, and their individuality is sustained throughout. The story is carefully constructed, although it must be acknowledged that the plot is not new. But an entirely new plot is hardly possible nowadays; the originality must consist in the treatment. The book is well written, but in looking on the dreamy world that surrounds Joyce Daring we seem somehow to remember Miss Thackeray. Here is a view from Colonel Loveday's window: 'Down by the side of the bridge—over which there was endless traffic of busy coming and going—some lingerers stood watching the

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unlading; idlers with hands buried deep in pockets and pipe in mouth; a woman or two; a child laboriously clasping a smaller child. There is a fascination for some of us in seeing others work while our hands are folded. The talk of the busy men floated back to her; the horses stood pawing impatient feet, and stirring the brown ripples as they were driven into the stream. The glimpses of steep and winding shore, seen through the arches of the bridge, revealed a dull olive-green, subdued and dingy enough to please the apostles of the new art. Then in a moment, as if some spell were abroad, there came a sudden rift in the grey curtain of cloud, a gleam of light to which the waters answered gladly; the muddy brown of the strand became golden sands, and the river wore a look which, Freda thought, was like nothing else than a sudden smile on a dear and familiar face.' The by-play in the book is charming. There is Miss Felicia, the little old maid, who has secretly adored Colonel Loveday for years, and is brave and meek enough to give place to her young niece. There is Tina, Joyce's sister, a heartless, self-indulgent little flirt, who poses always as an innocent child, and gracefully shirks all responsibility. And there are the two sisters, Barbara and Freda Dewhurst, with their bachelor establishment. On the whole, 'Surrender' may be safely recommended to all who care for a pleasant tale pleasantly told."—*Athenæum*, July 9, 1881.

"'Surrender' is another book on the same theme as that of Miss Craik's 'Sydney,' which we reviewed some little time back—that of a proud and sensitive woman making a marriage of convenience, not of love, with a wealthy man, much her elder, under the pressure of family difficulties, but coming to love him in the end. The main incidents, common to stories of the sort, occur as a matter of course; but there is some variety introduced in the handling, especially as to the actual marriage, which takes place at what both of the bridal couple suppose to be the husband's death-bed. The course of the narrative in this respect runs too uniformly in a well-worn track to arouse any special attention in the reader; and the same remark holds good of the selfish and sensuous brother and sister, fond of enjoyment, of amusement, and of costly, handsome surroundings, but with no sense of duty, of self-respect, or of independence, and ready to sponge on any one who will defray their expenses. Both these characters are drawn fairly enough, but it is to pattern, and a trite one. The real merit of 'Surrender,' which makes it pleasurable to read, is the very happy description of two young sisters, novelist and artist, who live and keep house together on their joint earnings, and supplement one another very prettily. Bab and Freda Dewhurst would redeem a much less respectable piece of work than 'Surrender,' whose chief fault, after all, is that other people have stolen the author's thoughts, and been beforehand in their publication—a fault more likely to strike a critic than an ordinary reader, who may not have seen, or may have forgotten, the many similar novels which deny this one the quality of freshness, and who will not fail to be carried agreeably along in a quiet fashion."—*The Academy*, July 9, 1881.

"If novels were all as good and readable as 'Surrender,' a reviewer's life would be a happy one. The plot is not of any great merit, it is true; and the hero, a romantic colonel, is a little like a disguised old maid. But, for all that, the story is suggestive and charming; and not a few of the personages—as, for instance, the heroine, her mother and sister, and her

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two friends—are very original, very true, and very attractive. There is plenty of fun, too, in ‘Surrender,’ and some wit, with many graceful and skilful studies of manners and character, and a healthy and kindly view of life that speaks well for the writer and comes pleasantly home to the reader. Altogether it is a very engaging little book.”—*Truth*, September 8, 1881.

“The ‘motive’ of the very pleasing and well-written novel to which the author has given the appropriate title ‘Surrender,’ has been worked out ere this both in fiction and in the drama. Joyce Daring, the heroine, marries a certain Colonel Loveday when he is lying on what both he and she believe to be his death-bed, although she does not love him. She consents to this act—which is in direct opposition to all her ideas and intentions—partly because it is his own strong desire, and she holds him in just esteem as a good and generous man, and partly because the marriage will enable her to give a comfortable home and happiness to her mother, who is dependent upon her. As every experienced reader of fiction will anticipate, Colonel Loveday recovers; and then—though not soon, or without sharp discipline of sorrow—Joyce learns to give him, in full measure, the love he well deserves. This subject is treated with a tenderness, grace, and insight which give it all the charm of novelty. The character of Joyce herself is finely conceived and skilfully wrought, and some of the minor personages of the story are charmingly portrayed.”—*Scotsman*, July 14, 1881.

“This is a very pleasant novel. The sister artists are delightful. Freda Dewhurst is a painter; Bab is a writer of novels. Each in her way are charming; but Bab of the trailing shoelace and untidy gown and hair is perhaps a little more the charming of the two. She sets to work like a little hero to redeem the wrongs of fortune; but she would laugh as merrily at the idea of her being a heroine as she laughed at the heroines of her own stories, some of which, as she explained, were ‘only written to cuts.’ Bab certainly did not magnify her office. The heroine of the story is Joyce Daring. The selfish dishonesty of her brother and sister, and the very flabby morality of her mother, have hardened her own honesty and rigid sense of duty into aggressiveness. In her horror of cant and insincerity she makes herself ungenerous and repellant. ‘Let me pass, please;’ ‘My letter, please,’ are the curt sentences in which she makes her request, or rather gives her orders to the persons about her. She has been so sickened with the humbug of those about her, that the commonest form of politeness seems to her morbid fancy a despicable piece of duplicity. Yet she can love and awake love, as readers of this pleasant book will discover for themselves. Joyce Daring’s aunt Felicia always misunderstood and depreciated her niece. Joyce mentions her soreness about this to Bab. ‘I think,’ she said, ‘I should have understood another woman better.’ Whereupon wise Bab makes this rejoinder, which shows that the little novelist knew something of human nature:—‘Dear old thing. She is like everybody else, except a very, very few. She can’t get out of herself into other people. She wanted to make you a present of her own feelings, and is hurt because you wouldn’t have it.’” —*Standard*.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

2. The second part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".



